



THE PATH OF INTERIOR KNOWLEDGE

PARMANANDA R DIVARKAR S.J.

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by **PARMANANDA R. DIVARKAR S.J.**

Rs. 33.00, \$ 6.00

This is the second and revised edition of a book that gathers together the insights on the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, which the author has shared with numerous audiences in various parts of the world. Enthusiastic comments from persons of long and wide experience indicated not only a general appreciation of his whole approach to the subject, but also what features had been found most enlightening and helpful.

The fruit of many exchanges and much reflection is now presented as a stimulus to a worthy celebration of the Ignatian Jubilee, commemorating the establishment of the Society of Jesus in 1540, and the birth of its founder in 1491.

THE PATH OF INTERIOR KNOWLEDGE



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THE PATH OF INTERIOR KNOWLEDGE

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Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola

2nd Edition

by

PARMANANDA R. DIVARKAR S. J.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

on this book and its author

The Path of Interior Knowledge is a revised and enlarged version of an earlier work entitled *Alive to God*, which was very well received when it appeared in 1979.

Enthusiastic comments from persons of long and wide experience indicated not only a general appreciation of the author's approach to the spirituality of Ignatius of Loyola, but also what features had been found most enlightening and helpful: *It is far and away the best thing I have yet read on the Exercises. It has clarified so many points for me, and has put into clear words some of my own thoughts... It is marvellously insight-full, and though my own thought processes are rather pedestrian, I found the ideas deep and satisfying... I am especially grateful for the way modern psychological insights are combined with ignatian concepts...*

So when the question arose of a fresh edition, as the first was soon exhausted, it was judged better not to reprint the original but to expand some of the topics and to reorganize the material, that it might serve a more practical purpose. The result is a new book. This book is now itself presented in a second, revised edition, besides having appeared in several translations. The Foreword by Tony de Mello is taken from the spanish version.

Parmananda Divarkar has spent most of his life in India, where he was born (Goa, 1922) and ordained (Pune, 1952) and for many years exercised a varied apostolate in university circles, lecturing on psychology of religion and directing courses in ongoing christian formation, besides being chaplain and student counsellor (Bombay, 1956-1971).

He worked nine years in Rome (1975-1983) as Assistant to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, during which time he also collaborated with the Ignatian Centre at the jesuit headquarters. Now back in Bombay, he edits the ignatian review, IGNIS.

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PRESENTATION

The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, when seen in the light of his own religious experience, reveal a vision of reality and a dynamic of personal growth that are very much in line with theological thinking after the Second Vatican Council and with the insights of modern psychology into human development.

This would explain the ever increasing popularity of ignatian spirituality in our age of renewal. There is certainly no dearth of literature on the subject. But the demand seems insatiable; and that will hopefully be accepted as an excuse for producing yet another book — and not entirely new at that.

The material assembled in these pages has been picked up along the way, so to speak, from a variety of sources and over a number of years. It is not the fruit of patient study but of keen interest, and was got into shape on the occasion of some courses organized by the Ignatian Centre at the jesuit headquarters in Rome. Part of it has appeared in print before, mostly in the form of lecture notes. The present effort is more ambitious, but the content remains what it was always acknowledged to be: the work of an amateur—understanding the term both as currently used and in its original sense. That is to say, this is the work of a non-professional who has no special competence beyond what might be expected of an average jesuit priest; but it is the work of a lover who has been enamoured of the Spiritual Exercises from his youth.

What is attempted here is not an explanation of the text of Ignatius but a commentary on some of the issues it raises. The introduction and the conclusion speak of the personality of the author himself. The intervening sections move through the successive stages of the retreat; with appro-

priate reflections on the Gospel as an aid to prayer. The title is derived from a phrase employed in the Exercises, which serves as the main key to their interpretation.

How far the choice of this phrase—Interior Knowledge—and the use that is made of it, have been determined by my indian origin, the discerning reader may be able to judge. The fact is that everything that has gone into the making of me, has influenced my thinking and writing.

And this gives me a welcome opportunity to acknowledge all the support and assistance I have received, not only in the production of this book, but all along the way. As I look back over sixty years, what I am most grateful to God for—within the gift of himself—is the large number of wonderful people whom he has brought deep into my life: members of my family, jesuit colleagues, and a host of very good friends everywhere. To them all I say with St Paul (Phil. 1: 3-5):

At the very thought of you I thank my God; and whenever I pray for you all, it is with joy that I pray, remembering how you have helped...

* * *

It is seven years since I wrote the above lines, and now I am asked to prepare a second edition, on the eve of the Ignatian Jubilee, at the close of which, in July 1991, I myself hope to complete fifty years as a Jesuit. With all this kept well in view, I have tried to improve the text somewhat, to make it more worthy of the occasion; and I present it with a prayer that it may contribute to a deeper understanding and more fruitful practice of the Spiritual Exercises.

PARMANANDA R. DIVARKAR S.J.
Bombay, 4th October 1989

FOREWORD

"It is not knowing much that fills and satisfies the soul, but tasting and feeling things interiorly," says St Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*. Some of our Hindu masters put this in another way: "Of what use is it to you to have counted all the mangoes on your trees if you have never tasted one?" This book is about having a taste of God — or what the author, using ignatian language, calls "interior knowledge of the Lord."

In the matter of contact with God mere intellectual knowledge is poisonous. Poison can be medicinal when taken in small doses. Religious people are mostly overdosed. They have grown accustomed, alas, to living "from the neck up"; so it gives them much joy when they get hold of a really good book about God and spirituality. They love ideas. They are also ensnared by ideas. Ideas were meant to be signposts, pointing the way to God. It is not uncommon to see droves of people engaged in climbing the signposts.

I once heard of a young man who said, "I have attended many seminars and have collected dozens of fine spiritual ideas. What I lack now is the power to put one of them into practice."

Having said this, I must admit I am not being entirely fair to ideas and to those who produce them. There is a type of idea that carries a power with it. It gives you more than mere intellectual gratification; it even gives more than inspiration. You have only to make the effort to grasp it and you feel a clarity entering your soul, even a transformation taking place within you. The idea seems to actually give you what it portrays. It sometimes puts into words what you have been experiencing all along and so the experience becomes more fully yours. It sometimes brings clarity where formerly you were confused. And sometimes it brings a sense of liberation and life where formerly you felt dead and bound.

I search, frequently in vain, for spiritual reading that will give me ideas such as these. I never fail to find some of them every time I set out to read something written by Father Parmananda. If you read this book carefully you are likely to find some yourself.

Anthony de Mello S.J.

*Eternal life is this: to know you, who alone are truly God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

—Jesus, in the Gospel of John, 17:3.

*All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power
of his resurrection, and to share in his sufferings.*

—Paul, in the letter to the Philippians, 3:10.

*Here I will ask for interior knowledge of the Lord, who for
me became man, that I may the more love and follow him.*

—Ignatius, in the Spiritual Exercises, 104.

1. INTRODUCTION

Strange as it may seem, the Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola was generally unknown, even among his followers, till the present century. That is to say, the facts recorded in it were familiar to many, but the text itself, whether in the original version or in translations into modern languages, was not printed and made available till some decades ago. Today there is a wide variety of editions, complete with notes and other aids, that facilitate direct access to Ignatius' own account of his spiritual journey.

This has not only heightened interest in his experience, but also deepened our understanding of its significance, particularly in relation to the Spiritual Exercises, which flow from that experience. It is precisely in the Autobiography that Ignatius tells us, with regard to the genesis of the Exercises, *that he had not composed them all at once, but when he noticed some things and found them useful, he judged them useful for others too and wrote them down* (99).

As for the Autobiography itself, Ignatius did not actually write it, but rather spoke it out, quite reluctantly and under

pressure from friends. The task of setting it down on paper involved several people, of various nationalities and tongues. The resulting narrative is in the third person and the style quite awkward. This may explain why the document remained for so long unpublished. But it is now recognized as a classic of religious literature, and as wonderfully self-revealing in its very clumsiness.

It would be unthinkable to leave it out of consideration in any inquiry into ignatian spirituality. So we turn to it as the starting point in our approach to the Exercises. We shall look, first of all, at the conversion of Ignatius, and at the process it followed till, according to his own statement, he could find God in all things. We shall then see how this process is in some way reproduced and communicated by him in the retreat. Finally we hope to show that the term *conocimiento interno* or *interior knowledge* is the most adequate expression of the basic insight that he gained from his experience, and the best available key to the understanding and appreciation of what he taught, and left to posterity in his little book.

All this will serve as an introduction to the more detailed study that will follow, of the path of interior knowledge traced by the Spiritual Exercises.

THE IGNATIAN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

The story of Ignatius of Loyola is well known: he was a brave soldier, wounded in battle and convalescing in his ancestral home; to while away the time he asked for books of chivalry, and as none were available he was given some devotional literature; he pondered over its contents and felt inspired to give himself wholly to the service of God.

All this is found in the Autobiography. But it also gives us what might be called the inside story, the inner movement of his conversion, from which we see that it did not follow the familiar path that is so strikingly exemplified in St. Paul: namely, the vivid realization of the relevance to oneself of a truth of the faith, leading to a complete change of life. Ignatius did reflect on the teachings of Christ and the example of the Saints; and he made some good resolutions. He also spent long hours in daydreams of romantic adventures; and he toyed with plans for future exploits. But nothing of this was ultimately decisive, though it had its measure of influence.

What made all the difference, and eventually brought about a thorough transformation, was his growing awareness of something that was taking place at a level more profound than thought or feeling, in an area of his being whose very existence was a surprising revelation to him, where he was most truly himself and closest to God. This is how it happened: it dawned on him that though he derived great pleasure both from his pious considerations and from his sentimental reveries, yet deep down, the former brought him peace and contentment, whilst the latter did not. He came to recognize the first as godly—that is, as leading to God and presumably coming from God—whereas the others were not.

A marginal note added to the text of the Autobiography tells us that *this was his first reflection on the things of God; and*

later, when he composed the *Exercises*, it was from this experience that he began to clarify his ideas with regard to the diversity of spirits (8). Ignatius' religious experience had from the start two marked characteristics: it was the awareness of a happening rather than of an idea, of an active God who not so much said as did something; and it occurred at a depth of his personality which became his base, so to speak, for responding to God and for assessing the worth of all his reactions to reality.

One is reminded of the scriptural text: *The word of God is something alive and active; it cuts like a two-edged sword but more finely; it can pierce through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts* (Heb. 4:12). It was this fine two-edged sword that Ignatius found cutting through his being, right to that centre where he discovered the real Ignatius. As this experience gained strength by his positive attitude, the sword cut away all the false layers, the mere appearances that had overlaid and smothered his true self. The fantasies that excited and allured his mind and his senses stood exposed for what they were and vanished like phantoms: *it seemed to him that his spirit was rid of all the images that had previously been painted on* (10).

Another man with another mind

Because his encounter with God was at the core of his being, his response was not only positive but total and unlimited, *as a generous spirit that is ablaze with God is wont to wish*(9), for it was a response to God as he truly is and not merely as he is grasped by the human understanding. Opening himself up to the whole strength of God, he felt a tremendous sense of liberation, of awakening to a new life that was more real and full of possibilities than the one he had spent so far. His wounds still held him down, but his spirit felt supremely free and roamed the universe, not just dreaming as before, but becoming increasingly aware of God lovingly at work everywhere and inviting him to be always lovingly at work, to be contemplative in action: *His greatest solace was to gaze often and long at the starry skies, for he thus felt a powerful interior impulse to serve the Lord* (11).

In the early stages, he conceived his service in terms of the ideas he had gathered from his reading: he wanted to imitate the saints, to do as they had done, or were said to have done. But here too there was a gradual descent into the depths, a progress from preconceptions to reality. When he got well and set off on his spiritual adventure, he confesses he was *as yet blind, though with great desires to serve him* (14).

At this point Ignatius begins to refer to himself as a pilgrim—someone in ceaseless quest of God. God for his part, he tells us, treated him as a teacher might deal with a child—patiently, but not sparing him the pain of the learning process. He suffered severely from scruples and temptations and the many trials of a beginner, which disturbed and confused him, so that he wondered within himself: *What sort of new life is this on which we are now launched* (21)? But his sojourn in the town of Manresa was not lacking in spiritual consolation, that reached its peak in a singular illumination.

A great deal has been written about this experience on the banks of the river Cardoner, which is regarded as supremely significant in the life and whole work of Ignatius, and of special relevance to the Exercises. But it remains veiled in mystery. The account in the Autobiography is overwhelming in its starkness: *the eyes of his mind began to be opened; not that he saw any vision, but he understood and came to know many things, both spiritual things and matters of faith and learning; and this with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him. It is not possible to set down all the details that he then grasped, many though they were, but only that he received great enlightenment in his understanding* (30). He goes on to say that he learnt more on that one occasion than in all the rest of his life; and there is a marginal note that adds: *he felt as if he were another man with another mind.*

This affirmation is all the more remarkable because Ignatius was extremely cautious in his statements and scrupulous about exaggeration. The only comment we would make is that this seems to be the culmination of his encounter with God as he really is, with God the Absolute,

embracing in himself all reality—so that all creation is seen in a new light and acquires a new meaning, which is its true meaning, and a new coherence and relevance. This is wisdom indeed, going beyond all mere knowledge; it is the *recta sapere* of the prayer for the light of the Holy Spirit. But it is not journey's end for Ignatius—he remains a pilgrim. There is still the process by which this awareness in the depths—the *enlightenment*, as he calls it, using the language of other spiritual masters—must penetrate the whole of his being, so that everything in him, as in Christ, is response to God, and he can find God in all things.

He begins a new period of schooling, with many wanderings all over Europe and a memorable visit to the Holy Land. Moving from one adventure to another, he realized more and more that the cost of discipleship was much higher than the performance of extraordinary penances; it was nothing less than a total putting of oneself into the hands of God, after the example of the Master. There was also a growing conviction that the following of Christ was a call to the apostolate; till the sense of mission became the whole horizon of his spiritual vision.

It is significant that whereas in the first pages of the Autobiography there is frequent reference to the fearlessness of Ignatius, in face of danger, pain or other difficulty, in the later portion there is more than one mention of paralysing fear: *He was seized with so great a fear that he could hardly get his clothes on* (79). This was not due to his becoming timid, but because he was pushing himself into extreme situations where he had to struggle against a natural shrinking from total vulnerability. He deliberately sought and obtained the experience of the power of God at work in the defenseless and dispossessed, and thus learnt the secret of effectiveness in the service of the Kingdom.

To be placed with Christ

The Autobiography comes to a rapid conclusion after he settles down in Rome, to become eventually the first Superior General of the Society of Jesus. But before he enters the city he has another very significant experience

in a little chapel at La Storta, which comes as a climax to many special graces received on his way there, and as an answer to the earnest prayer he had been addressing to the Virgin Mary: *he felt such a transformation in his soul and saw so clearly that God the Father placed him with Christ his Son, that he would never dare doubt this, that God the Father placed him with his Son* (96).

Once again there is a marginal note, which assures us that a much more picturesque account of this same incident, as narrated by one of his travelling companions, was correct and trustworthy in all its details, for Ignatius himself had told it so at the time, though now he could no longer remember the particulars. This lapse of memory is very strange, especially since Jesuit tradition from the beginning has attached great importance to these details, and much has been written about them. But there it is. All we can say by way of comment is that for Ignatius what mattered most was *to be placed with Christ*.

This seems to have been a very concrete and experiential realization of what St Paul so often speaks about, and in so many ways: to put on Christ, to be found in Christ, to have the sensitivity of Christ, to be conformed to the image of the Son, to be alive to God in Christ—in fine, to attain to a total christlikeness, so that not only one's fundamental attitude but the whole of one's being with all its activity is imbued with the Spirit of Christ and directed to the Father.

Is this not what Christ himself invites us to when he says: *Dwell in me, as I in you* (Jo. 15:4)? So much of the long farewell discourse speaks of our being placed with him: *I love you just as my Father loves me. Dwell in my love. If you obey my commands you will dwell in my love, in the same way that I have obeyed my Father's commands and dwell in his love* (Jo. 15: 9,10). And his final prayer is: *O Father! May they be one in us, just as you and I are one. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me* (Jo. 17:21).

The oneness of Jesus with his Father, whilst it did not relieve him of the felt need, as a man, for a more intimate contact in solitary prayer, nevertheless enabled him to find

God in all things—in the beauties of nature, but above all in men and women of every sort and condition; in experiences both pleasant and painful, and in mortal anguish.

The divine presence in all of Jesus' experience relativized in terms of God whatever was not God: thus for him, the whole of creation gained immensely in value precisely because God alone stood as Absolute. By his deep and manifest sense of the absolute reality of God—which is the ultimate meaning of the Kingdom which he proclaimed—Jesus was perfectly free and appeared as a challenge and a threat to all the false absolutes that men build up to reinforce their sense of security and of achievement. So it was practically inevitable that he should come into conflict with the exaggerated claims of religious authority and political power, not to speak of a whole system of social taboos for which no one in particular was responsible. He was thus doomed to die; but precisely so, his death was the supreme proclamation of God as Absolute: it was a perfect act of worship and the ultimate triumph of his cause, of God's cause. It was also the break-through to God that enables all mankind to share in the triumph, to attain to the freedom of the children of God, to have eternal life.

Eternal life is this: to know Christ intimately, and by entering into his experience, to know God—not merely to know about God through creatures and in relation to them, but to know God in himself, as Christ knows him, in his absolute reality. This is the truth that makes us free, and this is what Christ prays that all his disciples may attain to, after he has explained the implications of this great gift in the long farewell discourse. The ideal is to arrive at a point where every human experience is an experience of God in Christ: that is, in everything that happens, the disciple will be aware of God reaching out to him in Christ, and in his reaction to what happens he will himself be responding to God in Christ.

Because this is an experience in Christ, on the one hand it will embrace all that Christ embraced—the whole world and especially all mankind; but on the other, it will be an experience of God as God, in the light of which all creatures

become at once precious and expendable. Thus the experience is an inexhaustible powerhouse of energy for the transformations that are required, both internally in human hearts and externally in human society, for the establishment of the Kingdom.

To arrive at the point where every human experience is an experience of God in Christ is obviously a grace that comes from the divine bounty; but it is not an extraordinary grace in the sense of not being available to every Christian—rather, it is the very grace of being a Christian. But it is blocked and obstructed in many ways in most Christians.

The process of the retreat

The Spiritual Exercises are offered as a help, with the support of further graces which are also readily available, to be rid of obstacles and disharmonies and to put oneself in tune with God after the example and according to the pattern of Christ. In the bald language of Ignatius, what the Exercises propose is *to rid oneself of all inordinate affections, and being so rid to seek and find the divine will in the ordering of one's life for the salvation of the soul* (1).

The divine will that is sought, for the ordering of one's life, is not merely a better understanding of the Ten Commandments, though this is not excluded; nor is it just the practical application to oneself of the principles of the Gospel, though this holds an important place. It goes further, to the cultivation of a supernatural sensibility that can penetrate into those areas of being where no rule or law can reach but only the Spirit of Christ that has been promised to his disciples to lead them into all truth; in fine, it involves a being totally alive to God in Christ.

And the inordinate affections that must be got rid of are not just sinful attachments but also certain rigidities of character, and a whole range of inhibitions and narrow ideas, including theological prejudices, that come in the way of a total openness to reality. The method employed for achieving what might be called a clearing of the channels of communication between one's truest self, on the one hand, and God and all that comes from God, on the other—this

method can most simply be described as going through the experience of Ignatius himself; that is: becoming aware of a deeper level of reality in oneself and of God's presence and activity there, responding totally at that level, establishing oneself in that attitude of openness to God after the pattern of Christ, letting that openness permeate the whole of oneself, till one is wholly responsive to the whole reality of God—to God as he really is.

God as he really is, and we as we really are before him: this is the firm foundation of the Exercises—the Fundamental Principle, that we must take to heart, not as an abstract ideal merely, but as the concrete truth of our lives. This calls for the cultivation of a delicate balance—during the whole of the retreat, and ever after—between a deep appreciation and assiduous employment of personal effort and natural resources, and a profound realization of our total dependence on God.

In the past, the Exercises have been accused of proposing a sort of do-it-yourself sanctity. They have also been charged with promoting quietism, or a kind of dubious passivity. These conflicting judgements may have been due to the way the retreat was conducted by some directors. Or it may be that Ignatius himself makes no clear distinction between what is due to God and what is expected of us. There is in fact no such distinction, for everything comes from God, even our capacity to collaborate with him. But granted this, and that God is ever willing to help, there is something we must do—and do seriously, yet without exaggerating its importance. In other words, it is not easy to maintain the delicate balance we have spoken of—whether we are trying to convey it to others or to practice it for ourselves. But we do need it. Without a proper sense of how we stand with God, everything else can be a hindrance rather than a help. And this is true not only of what we call the spiritual life but of the whole of life and of all achievement.

Human ingenuity can devise many ways for coping with reality; and structures of many kinds—systems of thought, settled habits, social institutions, religious traditions—are

helpful and necessary for human progress, but they must never be absolutized; rather one must be always ready to transcend them, even whilst one profits by their support. Unfortunately, with a seeming inevitability they tend to attain the status of an absolute, which by definition cannot be transcended; so one is caught as in a trap. The way to escape is not so much by a direct attack against structures, for this can bring on some other form of tyranny; rather, it is through a realistic affirmation of God as Absolute—or in ignatian language, the Divine Majesty.

The tragedy of man is that he so easily relativizes God in terms of himself, and absolutizes his own creations. The Exercises present a sovereign remedy against this common temptation. They are a way of liberation; but the liberation must begin from the most oppressive of structures, which are those of one's own selfishness: *Let each one reflect that the measure of progress in the spiritual life is the transcending of self-love, self-will and self-interest* (189)—these are the last words of the section of the Exercises that deals with the Election or choice of a line of action.

And right at the beginning of the whole process, there is urged on the retreatant the need for an attitude of *indifference*. This is not at all a passive unconcern but a very positive unselfishness that is alive to God and apprehends everything in the light of God. This indifference creates in the depths of one's being an area of freedom where the Spirit of Christ can make himself felt. The Spirit, coming to the aid of human weakness, will inspire and impel to every form of activity, to service and to prayer—in the usual sense of these terms. Prayer and service will in their turn clear more space for the action of the Spirit by rendering the person more selfless and the Spirit will increase the sensitivity to God.

This sensitivity is the awareness whose discovery marked the beginning, and conditioned the whole progress, of the conversion of Ignatius. It lies at a level that is deeper than that of feelings or understanding. Psychologically, this might well be called the personal level, since the awareness that corresponds to it is like the one that exists between two persons that know each other in intimate relationship.

Theologically, it would be the level of faith, understanding faith not just as believing things but in its full sense of a personal commitment to God, which establishes a supernatural relationship that is both a state and an experience, an awareness.

It should be noted at this point that Ignatius was by no means the first to discover the deeper awareness. It receives ample recognition in both eastern and western religious tradition. Mystics in all ages have elaborated on it, and modern psychology has explored its dimensions. It would be fascinating to make a comparative study of the various findings on this subject. For the present, suffice it to say that the originality of Ignatius does not lie in his awareness of the presence and activity of God in the depths of his heart, but in making this awareness the foundation and starting point of a complete and intense christian life, and in building on it a whole method for arriving, with God's grace, at such a life—a life of faith and love that opens onto an ever greater freedom, creativity and effectiveness.

A key to the Exercises

It is in the Spiritual Exercises that Ignatius presents the method that experience taught him to be helpful for the cultivation of a deeper awareness of God and of all reality. And the question naturally arises, where exactly in the Exercises we find mention of this awareness. The simplest and commonest answer is to point to a line at the very beginning of the little book, which speaks of *el sentir y gustar de las cosas internamente* (2).

This is correct, but not as helpful as one might have hoped because of the difficulty in determining its meaning, especially when it is translated. Literally it says *to sense and savour things interiorly* but that is not saying much, beyond the suggestion of depth conveyed by the word *interiorly*. The whole statement of Ignatius is usually rendered in English as if he were making a distinction between mere information and real understanding. That is a valid and important distinction, but Ignatius means much more than that. What then is his full message?

A great deal has been written in recent times about *sentir*, which is regarded as a distinctly ignatian word. It is pointed out that even in ordinary spanish usage it is more meaningful than the corresponding english *feel*; and that Ignatius has further enriched its connotation. Attempts have been made to spell out its full significance. The result is not altogether satisfactory, if only because there is still no adequate english equivalent for the word. As for the other verb—*gustar*—not much attention is paid to it, and it usually appears as *relish*. This is all right—except that Ignatius himself is using *gustar* to express what is contained in another untranslatable word: the latin *sapere*. We have already referred to the old prayer for Pentecost: *da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de eius semper consolatione gaudere*. We know that Ignatius made much of consolation. He also made much of *recta sapere*, which is precisely that more profound and delicate sensitivity that he was so much concerned about. But he had the same problem with it that we have with his *sentir*: it is untranslatable.

At the risk of seeming pedantic we shall now turn to the word that qualifies both *sentir* and *gustar*: the adverb *internamente*. This does indicate some depth, as we said before, and similar words occur repeatedly, pointing to something that Ignatius had very much at heart: *interiormente* or *interno* keep appearing in the original, though they are often lost in translation. It is these that give the characteristic ignatian touch to all the rest. Moreover, there is the term *conocimiento interno*, or interior knowledge, which is found three times in the text, and always in a key position—so that from the three contexts we can get a fair idea of what Ignatius means, and how it is operative throughout the Exercises. *Conocimiento interno* is easy to handle in any language and provides the clue to the dynamics of the ignatian retreat. We shall conclude with an effort to establish its precise meaning.

The first mention of interior knowledge is in the Triple Colloquy which may well be regarded as the culmination of the First Week: I must ask for *interior knowledge of my sins* (63). The second is in the first exercise of the Second Week, where I seek *interior knowledge of the Lord* (104). This

will be my constant aim all through the rest of the retreat, till I come to the crowning point, which is the Contemplation to attain Love, where my prayer is for *interior knowledge of so many benefits I have received* (233).

It is significant that in the Triple Colloquy the first petition is concerned with *feeling* interior knowledge, whilst the second speaks only of feeling and the third only of knowledge. There is no doubt that for Ignatius *conocimiento interno* is the same as *sentir*. The question still remains about the exact meaning of either of these terms. This appears in the second text: interior knowledge of the Lord is precisely what Christ bestows on his disciples and which he identifies with eternal life: *to know you who alone are truly God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent* (Jo. 17:3). In other words, interior knowledge is what today we would call personal knowledge—the kind of knowledge we mean when we say that we know someone, as distinct from knowing about someone. When the one that is personally known is God, then interior knowledge is faith, in the richest sense of the word.

To know a person is indeed a form of knowledge, but it goes beyond either information or understanding; it is a relationship which is initiated by some sort of *introduction*, of being led into another, and which gives rise to all manner of mutual obligations. Personal relationship can, of course, exist only between persons, but it can affect relationship with things also; it can condition, without necessarily distorting, our grasp of reality. Thus a date in the calendar acquires a special meaning for me, if it happens to be the birthday of someone I love; it does not cease to be the date it was, but it becomes operative in my life. The deeper and more absorbing is the personal relationship, the more it will take in all other relationships, and hopefully it will enrich them. This is what is meant, in the third text mentioned above, by interior knowledge of so many benefits.

When the retreatant prays earnestly for *interior knowledge of my sins*, what he is asking is that he may see his sinfulness in the context of his intimate relationship to God in Christ.

The basic and constant concern, throughout the retreat, is precisely this intimate relationship, *interior knowledge of the Lord*. And the culmination of the process of drawing ever closer to God, is to see everything in the light of this closeness, so that every human experience becomes an experience of God. Thus the final petition is for *interior knowledge of so many benefits I have received*.

It is surely accidental, but nonetheless interesting, that the three phrases correspond to the three stages or aspects of the spiritual life, traditionally labelled: purification, enlightenment, union. These same three appear in the one statement with which St Paul so beautifully sums up the christian life: *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 6:11).

Paradoxically, interior knowledge can be at once very subjective and very objective. It is subjective because it relates everything to oneself; and it is objective because in doing so it distinguishes the self from everything else. The paradox is verified in the measure in which one is free as a person; and the ideal is to be wholly free so as to take all reality to heart with perfect clarity in attitude. The Exercises aim at such freedom, with the help of grace—which is precisely a liberation and a drawing closer to God and to all that comes from God.

A small detail is worthy of notice in this connection: in the passage of his Autobiography, to which reference was made earlier, where Ignatius describes his first reflection on spiritual things and how he came to distinguish between the various movements within himself, he uses the phrase: *poco a poco viniendo a conocer la diversidad de los spiritus que se agitaban...* (8). This is usually translated, even in languages that are close to Spanish, as if he had said that the spirits were moving *him*; whereas he only speaks of the spirits being in motion. In other words, Ignatius seems to detach himself from what is happening, and yet he sees it as supremely relevant to himself.

At the beginning he was completely caught up in his thoughts—quite lost in them, as he confesses. It was only

when he became aware of a deeper level of being that he was able to take a certain distance, and in so doing he could better grasp the significance of what he experienced. Herein is the secret of the art of discernment, for which he is so rightly appreciated today: to have that freedom of spirit and in the Spirit that enables one to see things objectively, in the light of God; and in that same light to realize what these things mean for oneself.

Such a realization will surely affect and gradually change one's life. But there is a more profound and significant transformation wrought in us by interior knowledge. Being a personal relationship, interior knowledge is also an involvement that cannot but have a deep influence on our whole being.

If the involvement is with God, if it is interior knowledge of the Lord, the effect is precisely what we mean by sanctifying grace: we are in fact divinized. It is very difficult for us to appreciate the tremendous difference that the state of grace makes; and that is a pity, because otherwise we might respond to it more meaningfully. But the difference is there, even when there is little to show for it on the surface.

At the end of the Autobiography, in a sort of appendix, Ignatius tells us where he himself has arrived by the path of interior knowledge. He acknowledges quite simply that *he had always kept growing in devotion—that is, facility in finding God; and this was greater now than ever in his life. Always, no matter when he sought God, he found him* (99).

The phrase, *finding God in all things*, is regarded as very typically ignatian, and as the expression of the full flowering of that awareness of God in the depths of his being, which was the beginning of his religious experience. It can also aptly represent the mature fruit of the Exercises and the ideal of the christian life.

I HAVE LOOKED FORWARD

(Lk. 22:15)

In the following pages, the contents of the Spiritual Exercises are treated in five sections. At the beginning of each, there is an indication of the items that are covered; and at the end, three considerations are provided, on appropriate passages from the New Testament.

Some acquaintance with the text and the practice of the Exercises will obviously help to a better understanding of what is said here.

The reflections on the Gospel make up a total of sixteen meditations that could be used in a retreat as a complement to what Ignatius himself provides. They are based on the conviction that the Exercises are above all an experience of Christ, and that historically that experience comes to a peak point in the Cenacle—that upper room that is traditionally regarded as the scene of the Last Supper, of the manifestation of the Risen Lord, and of the coming of the Holy Spirit, and is therefore intimately linked with the Paschal Mystery. Hence the introductory item that follows immediately.

0—Luke 22: 7-16, 24-29; and 1 Cor. 1: 26-31

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover victim had to be slaughtered, and Jesus sent Peter and John with these instructions: 'Go and prepare for our Passover supper.' 'Where would you like us to make the preparations?' they asked. He replied, 'As soon as you set foot in the city a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him into the house that he enters and give this message to the householder: "The Master says, 'Where is the room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples?"' " He will show you a large upper room all set out: make the preparations there.' They went and found everything as he had said. So they prepared for the Passover.

When the time came he took his place at table, and the apostles with him; and he said to them, 'I have looked forward with great longing to eat this Passover with you before my death! For I tell you, never again shall I eat it until the time when it finds its fulfilment in the kingdom of God.'

Then a jealous dispute broke out: who among them should rank highest? But he said, 'In the world, kings lord it over their subjects; and those in authority are called their country's "Benefactors"'. Not so with you: on the contrary, the highest among you must bear himself like the youngest, the chief of you like a servant. For who is greater—the one who sits at table or the servant who waits on him? Surely the one who sits at table. Yet here am I among you like a servant.

'You are the men who have stood firmly by me in my times of trial; and now I vest in you the kingship which my Father vested in me.'

*

As the Pasch approached there was a growing atmosphere of intrigue in Jerusalem; the apostles were uncomfortable, more than a little confused; but Jesus had everything in hand. He had foreseen, planned, arranged for every detail of this very special occasion. The apostles were not quite prepared; they knew vaguely that they would celebrate the Pasch together; but Jesus had looked forward with great longing to this privileged encounter, to this hour of greatest intimacy of self-revelation, of self-giving. It is ever so with those he loves.

He knew whom he had chosen; knew their shortcomings and lack of vision, which were all too evident even now; but these were the men his Father had given him; with all their faults they had stood by him; but above all, he had stood by them; he was always faithful and that was decisive in their lives, their ground for full confidence if only they let him have his way.

And his way is not to impose himself on their freedom, but to help them be truly free. He is among them as one who serves: always attentive to their needs, always available to their demands; to such an extent that they might easily take his concern for granted; but Jesus does nothing just as a matter of course, his every gesture is a manifestation of love, of a desire to share.

He wants them to settle down in his company; to put away their preoccupations and relax in his presence. There was nothing unrealistic in this: rather, in their consciousness of him they would see and feel the reality of the world and of man and of God, they would understand the meaning of their own being and their task in this life, what was expected of them.

For God does make demands, but he himself gives what he asks from us. Our God is a consuming fire, not destroying but transforming us into his own likeness, through Christ who is our holiness and our freedom.

*

My brothers, think what sort of people you are, whom God has called. Few of you are wise in the ordinary sense of the word; few are powerful or highly born. Yet, to shame the wise, God has chosen what the world counts folly; and to shame what is strong, God has chosen what the world counts weakness. He has chosen things low and contemptible, mere nothings, to overthrow the existing order. And so there is no place for human pride in the presence of God. You are in Christ Jesus by God's act, for God has made him our wisdom; he is our righteousness; in him we are consecrated and set free. And so (in the words of Scripture), 'If a man is proud, let him be proud of the Lord.'

2. PREPARATION

It is known that Ignatius was quite particular about whom he admitted to make the Exercises, and that he kept some worthy candidates waiting till he judged them to be ready. This concern has found expression in the introductory notes of his little book, where he explains what he expects from both the director and the retreatant.

The instructions and clarifications he gives are well worth pondering before plunging into the exercises proper. But with the passage of time the explanations themselves require a key to their correct understanding. So much depends on how one conceives the whole process of the retreat—or the dynamics of the Exercises, to use current terminology.

It would seem that in the recent past, the clue to this process was found in the First Exercise of the First Week, which was regarded as a pattern for the rest. There Ignatius speaks of using the *three faculties* (45) of memory, understanding and will. In the light of this, the whole retreat was presented as if it were mainly a series of exercises in logic, where one called to mind a truth of the faith, then reasoned

on its application to oneself, and finally took a firm decision on a practical conclusion. It was of course presumed that grace was at work also, and that God would not deny it to those who did their best. But for the retreatant it was a matter of dialectic rather than of dynamics.

Today it is realized that there is a much more subtle play of psychological factors involved in the process, and this provides also a more satisfying insight into the action of God himself. If a clue is to be sought in the very text, it could be said that it is rather in the First Exercise of the Second Week, where the urgent prayer is for *interior knowledge of the Lord* (104).

What we shall do in this section is to present an interpretation, in terms of *interior knowledge*, of the material that Ignatius places at the beginning of the Exercises. We shall therefore speak of the Annotations, or Notes; of the Pre-supposition, or Premise; and of the Principle and Foundation, or Fundamental Principle.

OUR ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

A privileged encounter with God cannot be programmed; but it can be prepared for. What the Annotations intend is to set the stage, so to speak, for the retreat. We have already seen what the first two have to say, about the aim of the Exercises, and about the chief means, or guiding principle, for obtaining the end. But there is more in those notes, according to the mind of Ignatius.

In the first annotation we come across a very characteristic ignatian notion, that of order and disorder. For him, disorder is not just that which is sinful but all that reduces a total aliveness to God; and order is not just a neat arrangement, but precisely this aliveness—it is being in tune with God, and perfectly responsive to him. The process that he proposes for achieving this may be better understood against the background of the ordinary process of human growth, and of the elements that come into play in determining our response to reality. This background may very simply be presented as follows:

What first comes alive in us is our feelings, and it is with feelings that we respond to our first experiences in infancy. Some of these feelings are hopefully positive—of comfort and security, of being wanted and cared for; other feelings will almost inevitably, and often predominantly, be negative—of inadequacy and fear, perhaps of rejection. Earlier feelings will condition later experiences, and these experiences will in turn affect our feelings. In this way we establish a certain relationship with our environment, with the people and things around us.

As we grow up and our reason begins to function, it is influenced by our already established feelings. We like to think that our reason is an independent, and indeed supreme, faculty that guides our whole life and activity; but as a matter of fact it is imposed upon in many subtle ways; and even

if it achieves a measure of objectivity in coming to a judgement, such a judgement can become outdated and remain in the mind as a prejudice. And of course, certain things we cannot cope with just go underground and disappear into the unconscious.

Finally, feelings and judgements, as well as the unconscious, bear on our fundamental attitudes, which become established as we grow older and increasingly recognize ourselves as persons, distinct from and related to other persons; and these attitudes determine to a greater or lesser extent our reactions to subsequent experiences, and the feelings and judgements that arise from them. Thus we are set in our basic character.

Whether this process produces a healthy personality or not, will depend on the balance of positive feelings, judgements, and especially attitudes, over the negative ones. But in the best of circumstances there is almost inevitably a certain negative element that begins with a childhood sense of confusion or the shock of birth. We may learn to cope more or less satisfactorily with this burden: to fight back our fears, to immunize ourselves against hurts. Unfortunately this is not always done in a wholesome way: we may cultivate insensitivity in certain areas, or seek compensation in others; we may rationalize, or develop blind spots. Later we shall find ourselves crippled by such defenses. But once the pattern is set it is not easy to operate in a different manner: to bring real healing to the real hurt, to bring confidence to a fear that has been driven underground. However, it is possible to change, at least in the case of people who are basically normal.

Our hope lies in the fact that we do possess a minimum of liberty in the attitudes we adopt. Deep down we are free, though within limits, and we can choose to have a basically positive attitude towards life and all that it brings, in spite of the negative experiences we have been through and the adverse influences we have suffered. We can strive to let this positive attitude permeate our judgements and feelings, not distorting, nor even changing them, perhaps, but adding a tone, a mellowness that can make all the difference.

A positive attitude can coexist with, and be superior to, negative feelings and judgements, as we may see in the moving words of Jesus to his people: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused. So be it! Your house will be left to you desolate* (Mt. 23, 37-38). We see here feelings of sadness and frustration and a severe judgement of censure, together with, and dominated by, a great concern and the tenderest caring. As St. Paul so beautifully puts it, in his deepest being Christ was a total *Yes* (2 Cor. 1:19).

An important aspect of the art of effective living is that of cultivating a basic positive attitude and reversing, to the extent that this may be possible and necessary, the ordinary process of our development: that is, rather than having the feelings influence judgements and judgements influence attitudes, to make it so that a healthy positive attitude penetrates our judgements and our feelings, and indeed our whole being.

Acceptance and rejection of reality

But even for a fairly normal person it may not be easy to determine where to begin cultivating a positive attitude. Very generally speaking, it has been said that the first thing one must do is freely to accept the inevitable. This may sound frivolous, but it is a fact that though many circumstances and not a few people can force us to act in a certain way, nothing and nobody can force us to do a thing unwillingly if we freely decide to do it willingly. But what good is that if we have to do it anyway? The good is that at the level of attitude, a positive dynamic is set in motion within us, and that can make all the difference in the world: it can release creative energy to surmount difficulties, or even physical energy to endure and to go forward.

We may once again have recourse to the Gospel for an illustration, this time not directly from the example but from the teaching of Jesus. In the sermon on the mount there is a wellknown text that says: *If anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him* (Mt. 5:41). The context of this

advice is that the roman legionaries, when they were in what today would be called occupied territory, claimed the right to demand from the native population that they carry their soldier's pack for one mile. This was resented of course, and most of all by the Jews, for whom the bearing of a burden recalled the slavery in Egypt. They could not help obeying, but they avenged themselves by cursing in Hebrew all the way, using an appropriate psalm.

What Jesus is suggesting is that the pack should be accepted with good grace, instead of curses, and the road covered willingly, even cheerfully. This might not make any difference to the soldier; but it would to the Jew. Even the soldier could be affected if an attempt were made to give him friendly conversation, with an eventual offer to take the load for a further mile. He could hardly say No; and if he did, nothing was lost. If, as was more likely, he said Yes, then everything was gained. From then on, the victim was master of the situation: he was carrying the burden because he chose to do so; he could drop it at any moment and nobody could object; in fact, the soldier had practically no say any more—the matter was literally in the hands of the Jew. But more than being a master of the situation and of his one-time oppressor, he was master of himself and of his inner resources.

It is obvious that if Jesus' advice had been followed, the history of the world would have been different, all through the centuries and in our own day. But it wasn't, and it still isn't. Accepting reality has never been our strong point. And sad to say, the reality that is most inevitable and yet most difficult to accept is just ourselves. Total self-rejection may be rare, and would be a real psychological suicide; but partial self-rejection is unfortunately far too common. And if we reject ourselves we shall find it very difficult to accept others; whilst if we reject others, they in turn will with difficulty accept us; and then, feeling we are rejected and unlovable, we shall all the more reject ourselves. Psychology may or may not have a way of breaking through this sad vicious circle. But our faith does tell us that we are, all of us, unconditionally accepted and loved by God.

This can provide a positive starting point; and even help us to overcome a particularly vicious kind of circle: that is, when self-rejection leads to resentment or anger against God, which brings on feelings of guilt, and then a further deterioration of our self-image and more self-rejection. We know that God has given us his Holy Spirit, precisely as a token of his acceptance of us and of our belonging to him; and that the Holy Spirit is constantly at work in us making us lovable and loving, helping us to cultivate a positive attitude—more even, he is himself our perfect, christ-like response, crying in our hearts: *Abba, Father!* (Gal. 4:6).

One of the many beautiful and deeply moving features of the story of the Prodigal Son is that whilst he was so conscious of having hurt his father, he never for a moment doubted that he would be accepted—at least as a slave. In fact he was accepted back as a son—for that is what he was, no matter what had happened. There was something in him that was not his own doing—and was wonderful: he was his father's child. We must by all means convince ourselves, in the light of faith, that despite all appearances to the contrary and notwithstanding many very real deficiencies, we are wonderful people, because God loves us and has given us the Spirit of adoption, in whom we say: *Abba, Father!* (Rom. 8:15).

We have earlier spoken about our basic character, which is shaped by our response to previous experience and in turn shapes our response to subsequent experience. Let us notice that the original meaning of *character* is *seal*, and this is exactly what St. Paul calls the Holy Spirit: *you became incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised Holy Spirit* (Eph. 1:13). What we come to is this, that our true basic character, our character as Christians and children of God, which does or should shape all our responses, is the Holy Spirit himself; and our most fundamental, constant attitude should be that of Jesus—a total and trusting openness to our Father, and to all that comes from him: *Abba, Father!* (Mk. 14:36).

This is what Ignatius, in his own way, proposes in the Exercises: that we cultivate a positive, generous attitude towards God, and that we come to the point where our

whole being is responsive to God and to all reality. This is not the way he expresses himself, of course; but we believe that this is what his experience taught him.

It comes out strongly in the fifth annotation: *It will greatly benefit the retreatant to enter upon the Exercises with a large-hearted generosity towards his Creator and Lord, surrendering to him his will and freedom so that his Divine Majesty may use both his person and his possessions in accordance with his most holy will* (5).

This statement contains a great paradox, for the dispositions here described are the ultimate fruit of the retreat, as expressed in the final oblation: *Take and receive...* (234). Does Ignatius then expect the retreatant to begin where he is supposed to end? In a sense, yes. And this is very much at the heart of the pedagogy of the Exercises.

Right from the start, there is a principle at work that generates a movement which carries the exercitant—in each phase of the retreat, and even within a particular exercise—to conclusions that seem to go beyond the premises that were his point of departure. This would be intolerable if the whole process were thought of in terms of logic, according to the *three faculties* interpretation. But it makes very good sense in the light of *interior knowledge*.

It is in fact a characteristic of personal knowledge, which distinguishes it from other kinds of knowledge, that it is not so much a taking in of information as a reaching out to the other as other. It is an introduction into another and is always an adventure involving a risk. It is a leap into the unknown, into what has yet to be discovered. And this is supremely true when the other is God.

An effective surrender to God, with all that it implies, is the fruit of the retreat; but it will not be achieved if at the beginning there is not at least a minimal openness to such a surrender. The link between the two, that runs through the retreat, is the preparatory prayer to be made at the start of each exercise: that all my interior dispositions and external behaviour, my whole functioning, may be directed exclusively to the service and praise of the Divine Majesty.

Helps and obstacles to contact

Another characteristic of interior knowledge is that whilst it can thrive on almost anything and express itself in innumerable ways, the relationship that it establishes between two persons is always immediate. Thus two separated lovers may have to communicate in all manner of indirect ways, but the love that is fostered by the communication is an immediate contact or communion—that is, it does not pass through a medium.

It is such an immediate contact that Ignatius expects to be established between God and the retreatant, without the director coming in between. He warns the latter to *let the Creator deal immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord* (15). The role of the director, as conceived by Ignatius, is very delicate indeed. He is mostly watching in the sidelines, so to speak; but he may have to be very active, especially if the retreatant experiences nothing: that is, if he does not feel moved in any way, for the supposition is that if he takes the least bit of trouble to expose himself to God, something is bound to happen. It may not be anything startling, but it will be significant. And if there is a total lack of significant experience, the situation must be thoroughly examined and set right (6).

Obviously, more than any undue interference on the part of the director, what can hinder contact with God are obstacles that rise from within the retreatant; and so he is advised to react strongly against them, *striving with all his might to come to the contrary* (16). Here the director's task is to offer opportune advice that can help understand what might be happening, so that mistakes can be avoided and defects corrected. He must make use of the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, according to need (8-10). In general, he must adapt the Exercises to the condition and the greatest profit of the retreatant (17-19).

The subtlest aspect of the responsibility of the director is to ensure that the exercitant feels comfortable with God, not perceiving him as a threat but rather as a gentle invitation, or perhaps as an exciting challenge, to freedom, to

growth and fulfilment. In a very true sense, the director must mirror forth to the exercitant God's total acceptance of him, God's overwhelming will to bring him to perfect happiness (Cf. 7). In fact, as we shall soon see, Ignatius envisages nothing less than a love-relationship between director and exercitant—*con amor* (22).

We have already seen how our acceptance of reality must in some way begin with an acceptance of ourselves, and how we could get into a vicious circle in this regard. Whatever psychology may propose as a way out of the problem, our faith tells us that in any case God accepts us unconditionally, just as we are. He wants us to change, and to keep on changing, not as a condition for his accepting us, but as a consequence: he loves us, and because he does, he wants us to be conformed to the image of his beloved Son. This sense of being accepted by God should bring us to accept ourselves, and him, and all reality; and to want to change and to grow, not just because of dissatisfaction with our present condition, but with the positive attitude of feeling capable and inclined to do better.

It may be that faith will meet here with a difficulty from personal experience, or rather from a lack of personal experience. That is, a retreatant may acknowledge God as objectively merciful and loving and tender, yet fail to accept him as such, effectively, in his own life, simply because of a lack of experience of being loved, because of not knowing what love is in concrete reality. Extreme cases of a poor self-image, of a sense of unlovedness and of unlovableness, may need competent professional attention; but within the limits of normality, it should be possible for a retreatant, inspired by faith and helped by the director, to come to a profound and effectively transforming acceptance of God in the fullness of his reality.

If one is comfortable with God, one will not be afraid to be alone with him. Indeed one will long, as Jesus did, for periods of solitary communion with the Father. What Ignatius recommends in the final annotation, for a retreatant who wants to profit fully from his experience, is a withdrawal from ordinary life. Traditionally, this is the directive

that has been taken most seriously, as the very word *Retreat* implies. Today it raises some doubts, in that it might create an atmosphere of unreality and a subsequent re-entry problem. But the idea is certainly not to play the ostrich; rather the contrary: one takes a certain distance from things so that one may see them more clearly and in the proper light, without the tyranny of all manner of pressures, whether internal or external; thus one can reach out to God in freedom.

At this point it is helpful to make a distinction between solitude and loneliness. Loneliness is something negative: it indicates the lack of a relationship that is perceived as necessary for wellbeing. Solitude is basically positive: it does mean an absence, but the absence of intrusion, of being crowded in; it allows for a space of freedom for growth, for being oneself, for reaching out to others. A certain capacity, even a felt need, for solitude is a mark of maturity, and especially of spiritual maturity. One can expand in the dimensions of the fullness of God, beyond all constraints, leaving all creatures behind, but to find them all in their source and Ground of Being: *The more our spirit finds itself alone and detached the more easily it can approach and attain to its Creator and Lord; and the closer it thus comes, the more it is open to receive graces and gifts from his divine and absolute goodness* (20).

When communication ripens into communion

Drawing Closer or *Dialogue in Depth* might well have been the choice of title for the second item in the Exercises, which Ignatius baldly labels Presupposition: it is a short paragraph that is hardly referred to even in the full retreat of thirty days because it is felt that it was meant to forestall certain prejudices that no longer exist today, at least not in those who freely decide to make the ignatian Exercises. But beyond the more obvious purpose, the Presupposition has also the germ of a principle that throws much light on the dynamics of the retreat and which is well worth elaborating. The text reads as follows:

So that both the director and the retreatant may be mutually aided and benefited, it is to be supposed that every good Christian

is more inclined to accept the statement of another than to reject it. If he cannot accept it, he should ask for an explanation; if the explanation is itself unacceptable, he should put the other right, with love; if this does not work, let him take every means available that the statement may be satisfactorily explained and found acceptable (22).

Ignatius speaks here of a mutual acceptance that is deeper than any approval or disapproval in judgement and like or dislike in feeling. It is an acceptance of the other as other, leaving him perfect freedom to be himself; it is not based on understanding but strives for understanding. It is an attitude of openness at the personal level that greatly helps to the grasp and appreciation of the truth of things at the level of sense and intelligence. It enables one to reach out beyond the limitations of one's own perception and to assimilate the vision of the other, of all others, of the whole world, of God.

One hears very much nowadays about the effectiveness of communication at the level of feelings and not just of ideas. But there is also the caution uttered that much hurt will result from such communication if there is not a mutual acceptance between those concerned. This takes us far beyond the traditional understanding of communication that analysed it as content and expression: you had something to say and you had to have a way of saying it.

Now we realize that there is a third element that is the most important of all, for without it there would be no communication at all—at least, no personal communication, and certainly no communion—and that is mutual acceptance. In deep intimacy, this mutual acceptance is practically the whole communication, for expression can be dispensed with and content can be the acceptance itself. And this acceptance can transform objective reality without distorting it—it gives new meaning to things, as was pointed out with regard to personal knowledge. It enables one to sympathize with another, and eventually to understand, if that is at all possible; and to go on accepting nevertheless, if understanding is impossible.

This is what Ignatius recommends in the Presupposition with regard to the relationship between director and

retreatant. But the principle finds its supreme application in the relation of the retreatant to God. The important thing is to accept God as he accepts us. And that is faith: accepting God in our lives. Not just accepting what God says, because he can neither deceive nor be deceived; but accepting God himself, with all that he is and all that he says—and through this acceptance to come to an ever deeper appreciation of who he is and how he cares, and what he expects precisely because he loves us.

The positive response of faith

The great truth about God and about our relationship with him is what Ignatius proposes in what he calls the Principle and Foundation. Perhaps no other item in the Exercises has suffered more from the *three faculties* interpretation than this one, which has so often been proposed as a logical argument composed of two premises (the purpose for which man was created, and the reason why all creatures were put at his service) and two conclusions (that man must use creatures in a way that is helpful to attain his end, and that to do this he must make himself indifferent with regard to all that is not God).

In fact, no amount of reasoning will bring us anywhere near a correct appreciation of how we stand before God and how totally dependent we are on him. Faith alone can introduce us into this mystery. This is not to belittle human reason, which is indeed a most precious endowment of our nature, enabling us to cope with reality in a manner far transcending the capacity of any other creature on earth. With our reason we can harness the resources of the world for our wellbeing and progress. We can also reach out to realities beyond this world, to God himself.

The sum total of human effort to cope with supernatural reality is what we call religion. Particular religions provide their adherents with a more or less complex system of doctrines, laws and forms of worship—creed, code and cult—with which the claims of God can be met. Most religions would affirm that the initiative in all this is from above, from some sort of divine manifestation. Then comes the

human effort to cope with the initiative and the manifestation, and this gives concrete historical shape to religion.

But when all is said and done, God is not something to be coped with. He is Someone who reaches out to us in love, as one who wants us to accept that love. Faith is our generous response to God thus revealing himself; whilst religion, we may say, is our attempt to cope with revelation. Obviously, faith and religion—as understood here—must go together. But we must always be on our guard against the temptation of religion to cope with faith itself, to reduce it to a neat system of creed, code and cult; rather must faith be constantly at work, liberating religion from its inevitable limitations and tendency to self-centredness, to bureaucratization and other congenital weaknesses of human institutions.

Here is where the realization of God as Absolute is required. This has been mentioned before, precisely when speaking of freedom from overdependence on the creations of our own genius, and it may be helpful to refer back to what was said earlier. The point we want to stress here is that for this realization to be truly liberating it must itself be more than the fruit of human genius. Reason, imagination, and other faculties, can take us very far in our quest of God; but never far enough. The God we can grasp will inevitably be, in some way, a God who has been cut to our size. What the Principle and Foundation invites us to, is nothing less than an intense faith-experience in which we find God as he is, and find ourselves and all things in him.

But what is this faith-experience, about which one hears so much these days, and how does it come about? The process of faith—understanding faith in the full sense of the word—is much better explained in terms of what has been said about *interior knowledge of the Lord* and about personal relationship, than as a chain of argument such as was proposed by the old apologetics.

As was explained before, in a personal communication we can distinguish mutual acceptance on the one hand, and content and expression on the other. Corresponding to this, in personal relationship we find two lines of contact: one is internal, so to speak, and consists of mutual trust;

the other is external, and consists of various manifestations: words, deeds. Both lines are present from the beginning; but in the early stages, the trust may be very tenuous—perhaps no more than the willingness to give each other the benefit of the doubt. The weight of the relationship then falls on the second line, which can be tested for its reliability: we can check to some extent on the truthfulness of words, the genuineness of deeds. But as the relationship progresses cautiously on this line, the other line can gain strength and eventually bear the full weight of the relationship. There is then complete mutual trust and not just a game of carefully watched steps: the trust can go beyond anything that could be proved by reason, but is not unreasonable.

It is so also with faith. There must be at the beginning an initial good will, a minimal openness. God reaches out to us in ways that can be tested—he does not offer proofs in the scientific sense of the term; but he performs signs and wonders; he acts in our lives in a way that makes us take notice, that points to something beyond. A sign does not prove anything, but it gives us confidence to proceed on the way. In the case of faith, this way leads into the heart of God himself. It is an endless way, but supremely satisfying at each step, if only we have the courage to make the journey.

Following tradition, we may distinguish three main stages in this journey. The first is when perceiving all about us the signs of God's love, we recognize his presence and accept his invitation; we find God in all creatures. The second is when entering deeper into the mystery of God, we come to realize that he is infinitely more than any sign can tell us; we are led into the desert and find God beyond all creatures. Finally, attaining to God as he is in himself, we find all creatures in God; we know and value them as they truly are, in God. The perfection of this final stage will come only in heaven, when God is *All and in all* (I Cor. 15:28). But already in this life we must plod on steadily towards the goal.

If we feel that we shall never be able to make it, it may help us to remember that the Virgin Mary herself had to progress slowly and painfully. The very first recorded words of Jesus were addressed to her on precisely the point made by

the Principle and Foundation—who God is and how we stand before him. It is clear from the text of St Luke that at the loss in the Temple, Mary was really hurt by the behaviour of her child—not that he stayed behind, but that he did not have even a minimal concern to tell his parents. Granted that he was detained by duty to his Father, she was truly his mother and had a right to know.

And Jesus answers bluntly that when God calls nothing else and no one else matters. God is not just the first of our concerns; he is the One without a second, in the beautiful phrase of the Upanishads. Before his Father, his mother does not take second place; she disappears into nothingness. Mary did not understand, but she treasured the lesson in her heart. It was only at the foot of the cross, when not even the humanity of her Son could stand before the awful majesty of God, that she understood.

But as for Christ, so also for Mary and for all of us, to be as nothing before God does not mean annihilation. On the contrary, it leads to the fullness of existence. Moreover, it is in becoming obedient even unto death that Christ receives all power in heaven and on earth. He invites us to share in his experience, to make the adventure of faith, to recognize that God alone is Absolute and all else relative—to *make ourselves indifferent to all created things* (23), not through apathy but by a vibrant aliveness to all reality.

When this aliveness is a response to persons—whether it be to God or to our fellow human beings—it manifests itself at the practical level in availability: that is, in a readiness to be of service. Such is the disposition of Jesus, as we see him portrayed in the Gospels: he is always attentive to any appeal, even if it be mute; he can be approached anywhere, at any time; he does not mind being taken advantage of—not because he is weak but precisely because he is strong. The fearless friendliness that characterizes his dealings with the men, women and children of his day, is very much appreciated in our own day, as a most attractive trait of any personality. There is no reason why we should not be like him. That is what we are called to; but it takes determination and discipline to get there.

WHAT DO YOU WANT...?
(Lk. 18:41)

The mission of Jesus comes to a peak point and a perfect summing up in his death and resurrection—in the Paschal Mystery. And the christian life is an entering into that Mystery, and penetrating it—or being penetrated by it—ever more deeply. The retreat is a help in this process of assimilation, of progress in the christian life.

The efforts of Jesus to prepare the apostles for a fruitful participation in the great events of his death and resurrection can enlighten us with regard to the dispositions required of us in the retreat, and the principles that must guide us—as they are explained in the introductory section of the Spiritual Exercises.

In the following reflections, the basic text is taken from the Gospels and there is a concluding passage from St. Paul.

1—Luke 18: 31-43; and Phil. 3: 10-14

He took the twelve aside and said, 'We are now going up to Jerusalem; and all that was written by the prophets will come true for the Son of Man. He will be handed over to the foreign power. He will be mocked, maltreated, and spat upon. They will flog him and kill him. And on the third day he will rise again.' But they could make nothing of this; what he said was quite obscure to them; they had no idea what it meant.

As he approached Jericho, a blind man sat at the roadside begging. Hearing a crowd going past, he asked what was happening. They told him, 'Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.' Then he shouted out, 'Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.' The people in front told him sharply to hold his tongue; but he called out all the more, 'Son, of David, have pity on me.' Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came up he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Sir, that I recover my sight,' he answered. Jesus said to him, 'Recover your sight; your faith has cured you.' He recovered his sight instantly; and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all the people gave praise to God for what they had seen.

*

Jesus tries to prepare the apostles for the great events of the Paschal Mystery; but they are without understanding: they cannot see the sense of it all, nor its relevance to themselves. So he gives them an object lesson, a lesson that is meant for all of us: a blind man is begging by the wayside. Jesus had often passed that way, but the beggar had been unaware or unconcerned; he was content to make his routine appeal for alms—that was the only life he knew. But today something stirs within him, he realizes that something is happening: Jesus of Nazareth is passing by—indeed passing by for the last time—and if that is so, nothing is too wonderful to expect. This is his great chance, his one chance—for all of us have a chance, if only we recognize it—and so he shouts out.

He is told to shut up; he is a nuisance, he should not try to stand out in the crowd but be like the rest. His reaction is to shout all the more—he is not discouraged but spurred to greater effort. Only then Jesus stops, only then he seems to pay attention. He orders the man to be brought to him,

for he needs help to come into contact with Jesus. (Mark's Gospel adds an eloquent detail: the man throws off his cloak to be more free to make his way). Now the very people who had tried to silence him are ready to assist him because of his positive, determined attitude.

Jesus asks him what he wants; he must formulate his petition. The sky is the limit, but the man is well aware that basically there is only one thing wrong with him: he is blind. He is also a beggar, he needs many things; but that is only because of his blindness. All he needs, all he wants, is to see. And he gets his sight; his faith wins it for him: faith is not just believing things, it is vital contact with Christ; he it is that saves, but we must be in contact with him.

He follows Jesus giving glory to God; that is his identity now, companionship with Jesus for God's greater glory—and the benefit does not stop short with himself, for the people were affected and gave praise to God.

There is no knowing how far he followed Jesus, but that particular journey ultimately led to Calvary, and opened on to the passage beyond the grave, to the perfect fulfilment of the Resurrection. This same journey every disciple is called upon to make; and all along the route comes the voice of encouragement, urging on the weary and the vacillating to reach out for what lies ahead.

*

All I care for is to know Christ, to experience the power of his resurrection, and to share his suffering, becoming like him in his death, if only I may finally arrive at the resurrection from the dead.

It is not that I have already achieved all this. I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on, hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me. My friends, I do not reckon myself to have got hold of it yet. All I can say is this: forgetting what is behind me, and reaching out for that which lies ahead, I press towards the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus.

2 — Luke 19: 1-10; and Rom. 8:9-11; 16-17

Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a senior tax collector there, named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was anxious to see what sort of man Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him: 'Zacchaeus, come down! Hurry, because I must stay at your house today.' And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. All the people who saw it started grumbling: 'This man has gone as a guest to the house of a sinner! But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord: 'Look sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him: 'Salvation has come to this house today; this man also is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.'

*

This is a study in contrasts. Immediately after an encounter with a blind beggar, who is very much a part of Jewish society though on the margin of its economic life, Jesus meets a rich publican, who is rejected by society but has a key role in its economy. However, the similarities between the two men are still more striking: both are eager to get in touch with Jesus; both suffer from handicaps but very decidedly take the means to overcome them; both are subjected to criticism, but — above all — both get what they want by establishing contact with the Saviour.

So, concentrating now on Zacchaeus: what sort of man was he? He seems nice enough, even quite charming in his attitude and behaviour. Yet he indirectly admits to cheating and has a record that is particularly odious today: he is an exploiter of his own people. The answer to the puzzle is that he is no different from any of us: we are nice people, mostly, with not a few charming traits; but we live in a world that has got spoilt, and some of its dirt rubs off on us.

There is much we can do to counteract the evil influences that work on us in more or less obvious ways; but at the heart of any strategy must be our union with Christ. That is what transforms, converts us, and keeps us on the right track. Christ takes the initiative in inviting himself, but he is prompted by Zacchaeus' gesture; yet that itself was inspired by the attractiveness of Jesus' personality. And he attracts by his unconditional acceptance of events; he transforms, not so much through admonitions and reproof, as by what he is, and by the love of God that he makes manifest.

Our union with Jesus is assured by the grace of baptism; and there is a power at work in us, transforming us into his image — the power of the Spirit: that same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead and established him as Christ the Lord. We are not alone in our efforts to be our better selves.

*

You do not live as your human nature tells you to; you live as the Spirit tells you to — if, in fact, God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ lives in you, although your body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is life for you because you have been justified. If the Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from death, lives in you, then he who raised Christ from death will also give life to your mortal bodies by the presence of his Spirit in you. God's Spirit joins himself to our spirit to declare that we are God's children. Since we are his children we are heirs as well: heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing his sufferings so as to share his glory.

3—John 13: 1-3; and Eph. 1: 3-6

It was before the festival of the Passover, and Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father. He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was.

They were at supper, and the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him. Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands, and that he had come from God and was returning to God.

*

The apostles were confused when the supper began, and they grew increasingly distressed as it proceeded. Jesus too was deeply distressed, but he was far from confused. He knew, as they did not, the trials that lay ahead, but he knew also that his whole life was ruled by the Father's will. He could not but be affected by the events that touched him so much more closely than they did the apostles, but he is at peace and brings peace to others.

His calm is not the lofty detachment of a philosopher; he is very much concerned, and most so for those who were his own and whom he would love to the end. But there is a wonderful balance in his whole attitude that springs from his firm conviction that his being is totally rooted in the Father, who is Lord of all.

He saw everything, and every detail of his earthly existence, in the light of the Father's love, which was for him a manifest, a lived reality. The Father's will was his sustenance—not an imposition to be submitted to with resignation, but a precious gift to be grasped with both hands. He knew that the Father had put all things into his hands, and he loved these things, the world and the people that were in it, because he so supremely loved the Father.

And what he had so much at heart was that we should understand how the Father himself loves this world and all of us in his Son, how he has chosen us in him from the beginning, for the fulfilment of the divine plan of grace.

We so easily judge of God's plan, and of his action in our lives, in terms of what we regard as convenient for

ourselves. We call a circumstance providential when it is to our liking. As if providence were not functioning, or not functioning properly, when things went—as we say—wrong. As if these so-called wrong events were not really to our best advantage, if only we knew how to take them, as coming from the hands of a Father who knows and who cares.

Faith does not necessarily transform an unpleasant situation into a pleasant one; but it can help us to see it differently and to accept it positively. It gives us a perspective that does not detract from the reality of things, but rather gives them their full and authentic value—in the light of God. It gives us a freedom, the freedom of the children of God, the freedom that Jesus himself so abundantly manifested in the exercise of his mission.

Jesus was not ignorant that there was evil in the human race, and that so many and so much would turn against him in this hour; he knew that the power of darkness had gained mastery over one of his chosen ones. But even in this he did not fail to see not only the Father's will but the Father's love. And he embraced it all and drew it to his heart. In his great pain, in his mortal anguish, he rejoiced that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father.

*

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: he has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ, for his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved.

3. LIBERATION

The question has been asked, what kind of person Ignatius had in mind as an ideal retreatant. We have seen that he was particular about whom he admitted to the Exercises. Yet the very first exercise he proposes seems to envisage someone who is sunk in sin. The best answer seems to be that what mattered for him was not so much the moral state of a candidate as his psychological attitude: in other words, the important thing was not where one stood now but how far one was willing to go.

The christian condition is to be *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 6:11). This is attained to in baptism, but not as a static position. Rather, it is a process that must progress, yet can also have reversals. One can fall back into sin; and in the best of circumstances there are some traces left of sinfulness. But the Holy Spirit is in the heart of the believer, as a mark of God's ownership and as a powerful force that works to promote the ever greater freedom of the children of God: *the Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people; and assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who belong to him* (Eph. 1:14).

The Exercises, and specifically the First Week, are offered as an aid to a Christian who may find himself at any stage, and is eager to go forward, to be more alive to God. But this does not answer all the difficulties we meet with in the very initial steps of the retreat, especially when we view them in the light of current spirituality. It would seem that Ignatius himself is not quite at ease in presenting his material; we sense a certain awkwardness, but this may be only a projection of our own discomfort because of some of the ideas presented or because of the way in which they are expressed.

Be that as it may, it is generally agreed that the real Ignatius, and the main thrust of the phase dedicated to a consideration of sin and of our own sinfulness, come through chiefly in the colloquies. And a colloquy, we are told, *really means conversation, the way one friend may converse with another, or a servant with his master, whether asking a favour, or acknowledging some fault, or sharing his concerns and seeking advice on them* (54). So the important thing is to maintain and foster a personal relationship based on interior knowledge. And it is in these terms that we shall try to understand the First Week.

Using *interior knowledge* as a key to interpretation, we shall go through the various items in the order in which they are presented in the text: First, the Examination of Conscience—which is divided into the so-called Particular Examen dealing with a special point that needs attention, and the General Examen with a note on the advantages of a general confession during the retreat. Then, the five meditations on various sins and their consequences; that make up the substance of the Week. Finally the Additions or Additional Practices that are recommended, with special attention to penance.

ALIVE TO THE FATHER

What Ignatius says about the Examination of Conscience, whether particular or general, may be regarded as the concluding part of the introductory material; or as being already the beginning of the First Week; or finally—and it would seem, more correctly—as an independent item which is placed where it fits in most conveniently and appropriately. It is very much of a self-contained unit; and though it is certainly a part of the Exercises, Ignatius also regarded it as a sort of substitute for them, in the case of those who could not make the retreat profitably (18). Moreover, he recommended and even urged the practice of the Examination outside and beyond the retreat, as an on-going exercise.

He seems to have been particularly convinced of the practical utility of his way of explaining the difference between mortal and venial sins (35-37. Cf. Autobiography, 70). This is an important distinction and it has done good service in the guidance of consciences. But it lends itself to two opposite exaggerations: on the one hand, to taking venial sins lightly, because after all they do not lead to serious consequences; and on the other, as a reaction to this, to an undue extension of the area of mortal sin, so that it covers faults that cannot reasonably be regarded as making a total break with God. Today we would stress that there are grave sins, that may not be mortal because they do not completely destroy our friendship with God, and yet cannot be called venial because they do much harm. We speak of social sins whose gravity weighs heavily on a group of people, which must be taken seriously by individuals, yet may not be imputable to any one person as mortal. In other words, the simple division into mortal and venial does not seem adequate for the many degrees of responsibility that we recognize in human conduct. A more nuanced classification is needed for the formation of mature consciences.

Truth to tell, there are many other things in the text under consideration that call for updating. And much that is of permanent value, and was dear to the heart of Ignatius, is not stated at all, as happens often enough in his writings. When he insisted that the Examination of Conscience should always be made, not only during and outside the retreat but also when one was ill and unable to engage in other devotional practices, what he had in mind was much more than a review of past failures. His idea was of a constant, grace-aided effort to arrive at a keener awareness of God, a more limpid selflessness and a watchful attention to opportunities for greater service. It has been said that Ignatius is thinking not so much of conscience as of consciousness, or a general but delicate sensitivity to all that is real.

So much for the Examen. We get into further difficulties as we proceed to the exercises proper. The very first one presents for consideration three sins, each of which creates problems for a modern retreatant. But more than any particular feature, the big objection to the meditations today is their seeming emphasis on self-rejection. In the light of what has already been said about the capital importance of a positive attitude of acceptance, it is not easy to explain texts like these:

For the present case of sins, the setting will be to use the imagination and picture my soul as imprisoned in this corruptible body, and my whole being in this vale as one exiled among brute beasts . . . (47); similarly, for the second exercise, I will see myself as a great sinner in chains—that is, being led in chains to appear before the supreme and eternal Judge . . . (74); thirdly, consider what the whole creation is in comparison with God: what could I then be just by myself? Fourthly, consider all the corruption that is in me, and the ugliness of my body. Fifthly, regard myself as a running sore whence has issued so much sin and evil and such foul poison (52).

What exactly is Ignatius hoping to achieve by such considerations? Whatever the answer may be, it is obvious that the question must be placed in the context of the whole movement of the First Week and of its main thrust. And to appreciate this movement and thrust it will help to reflect briefly on how the sense of sin enters the human conscience and how it develops in one way or another.

Components of a healthy conscience

The sense of sin—or speaking more generally, our moral conscience—has been variously accounted for: for some, conscience is the quiet voice of God warning or reproving us in the depths of our hearts; for others, it is simply a hang-up from early childhood inhibitions induced in us by elders; or more commonly, it is just our reason operating in the sphere of our moral responsibility. Psychologists today would be inclined to say that there is a measure of truth in all these views: that is, our conscience is a complex reality in which a wide variety of elements is combined; and a sound conscience is one in which there is a proper balance of the components. We shall try to explain this by tracing the development of the human moral conscience in the terms that we have already employed.

An infant is a social being from birth, if not earlier, and must from the beginning be educated to social living; it must acquire good habits which would be hard to come by at a later stage. It has only the feelings as a guide and must be taught to associate pleasurable sensations with socially acceptable behaviour, and unpleasant sensations with unacceptable behaviour. In other words, the process is not unlike that of the training of a little domestic animal, and there is created what we may call an *animal conscience*. There is obviously here an imposition from the outside, which cannot be challenged; and in the best of circumstances this can produce a deep-seated resentment, often at the unconscious level, that manifests itself in unexpected tantrums.

As a child grows up and can make judgements, it must be helped to see that the impositions are in its own best interest, that the behaviour that is socially accepted is in fact the one that is most suited to a rational being, and that it should willingly be adopted, irrespective of any external pressure. Thus a *rational conscience* comes into being; it takes up and in a manner transforms the animal conscience, besides adding new elements of right conduct.

Unfortunately, many factors militate against the full emergence of a rational conscience—one of the most significant being the reluctance on the part of elders to relin-

quish the threat of unpleasant consequences as an inducement to good behaviour. We are afraid to trust the young with the use of their reason, and we tell them—with or without words—that they are expected to act rationally, not only because otherwise they will not do justice to themselves as human beings but also because something nasty will happen if they do not. The result is that the process of growth is in some measure retarded, or even reversed: feelings—mostly of fear—dominate, often in a very sneaky way, over sound judgement and commonsense.

At adolescence one becomes more fully conscious of being a person, a responsible being that must freely respond to reality and particularly to other persons. We respond, not just because it is to our advantage to respond, nor because others impose a response on us, but because it is good to respond; it makes us happy to make others happy; it makes us more alive and free, more fully ourselves; and we discover more and more of ourselves in others. Conscience becomes a positive personal attitude to life, to reality, to others, to God. It takes up all that one has learnt to regard as worthwhile and makes it one joyous giving. That at least is the ideal—the *personal conscience*—and hopefully some of it is a reality. But so much depends on the various circumstances of growth and education, and even in the best of cases there remain traces of crippling fears, or the rationalization of such fears, that tyrannize over a generous attitude.

It must be confessed that a good deal of christian education, whether at home, in school or within the parish, has tended to produce an infantile or self-centred conscience. So often a guilt-complex takes the place of true contrition. To restore proper balance and put the accent where it belongs, there is need for that reversal of the process of which we spoke earlier, so that a healthy personal attitude permeates our judgements and feelings.

Facing the fact of sin

The concern of Ignatius in the First Week is certainly the cultivation of a mature God-centred conscience—as part of a more total consciousness of reality. What he

actually does in the meditations on sin could be explained as follows, in terms of what has been said above: rather than begin at the top or at the bottom, so to speak—that is, at the levels of what we have called the animal and the personal conscience, where the retreatant would more likely encounter difficulties—he strikes out at the middle, at the rational conscience, trying to bring out the senselessness of sin and the futility of turning away from God. That is the First Exercise. Having entered there, he hopes the more easily to bring the retreatant to a personal sense of sin, of how ungenerous it is to reject God: this comes in the colloquy and is taken up in the Second Exercise. Only after one has firmly established oneself in this area by repeating the exercises, does he propose, in the Fifth Exercise, that one venture into considerations evoking fear, *so that, should my faults make me forget my love for the eternal Lord, at least the fear of the punishments may help me to avoid sin* (65).

It may still be asked whether all this could not be achieved with considerations other than those proposed in the Exercises. Granted that they are drawn from scriptural sources, are there not other possibilities in the Bible itself? The answer may well be in the affirmative; but the problem we are facing lies deeper. We have already spoken of self-rejection; there is also the more general question of the consequences of sin and how we are to conceive them. In fact, it would seem that the heart of the difficulty, or of many difficulties, is precisely here. What we mean to say is this:

We have been brought up to think that the worst consequence of sin is way out there: Hell, as it has been traditionally presented, is terrible but lies at the end of time and space. It seems so remote as to be ineffective as a deterrent. So we reinforce it with various kinds of dubious elaborations: we project a crude image of the sufferings involved, we extend the area of faults that can lead to such sufferings, we add a number of qualifications to God's merciful love, we try to interiorize the distant horror by conjuring up a repulsive self-image. . . . All this is rather counter-productive

today, and can lead to a total rejection. And it is so unnecessary, because the consequences of sin are in fact very close to us, within us. That is where the damage is done, right inside, and it is done right now, when we choose the path of self-destruction. This is not to deny that there is an ultimate result; but simply to stress that the frightening thing is not so much what may or may not happen later, as what is happening here and now; and that the important thing is what we are doing about it now. These are the truths to be insisted upon. Yet fear alone will not move us to effective action; we need confidence, and the motivation of love.

This brings us to the colloquies, and to the first and best of them all, where the retreatant is before the Saviour on the cross and asks: *What have I done for Christ? What am I doing for Christ? What should I do for Christ?* (53). Often enough, this colloquy is made as if the questions were: what have I *failed* to do...etc. Obviously our failures will enter into this loving dialogue; but we must be honest enough to admit that we *have* done something for Christ. Indeed, some of us will have to muster courage—yes, it takes courage—to face the fact that we have done more for Christ than for anyone else on earth: we have given him our life. True, we did not do it as well as we might. True, it comes from his grace that we did the little we managed to do. But we did it, and we would be less than fair to him if we thought he did not care. He does care—and that can make all the difference for the future, to the way we shall in fact answer the last question: what should I do for Christ?

There is more than a suggestion here that the response of love is in service. Already now, right at the beginning of the Exercises, there is a delicate invitation to engage in the apostolate, to work not just for the salvation of one's soul but for the establishment of the Kingdom, for the fulfilment of God's plan for all creation, centred in Christ who died and rose again.

Corresponding to this broadening vision of our task, there is need of an ever deeper realization, not just of what we have done or not done, but of what we are and of how

we stand in our life-situation. And so we come to another colloquy, the solemn Triple Colloquy which makes its first appearance at the peak point of the First Week, in the so-called Repetitions (63), where for the first time also there is a prayer for interior knowledge. It is addressed to the Virgin Mary, to Christ our Lord and to the heavenly Father, asking for the triple grace of a thorough understanding not only of the extent to which we have been estranged from God, but also of the causes—the roots within us—of this estrangement, and of the external circumstances that have contributed to it—so that we may strenuously shake off this negative burden and fully yield ourselves to God. Both from the book of the Exercises and from other documents, we know how much Ignatius made of this approach to God through the Virgin Mother and her Son, and how confident he was of its efficacy. The dominant note, then, of such a colloquy is one of being accepted by the Father.

Perhaps this sense of acceptance needs to be stressed today, as has already been pointed out. For this it would help to notice that the idea is not to hide behind Jesus and Mary, so to speak, because we are afraid to face God. Rather, what is proposed is a concrete way of affirming that, in the Son who for us was born of a human Mother, we are truly children of God. If we are comfortable with our Father, we are more ready, even psychologically, to let surface to our consciousness many less pleasant features of our life and character which we might otherwise tend to ignore. This feeling comfortable, from which comes a deeper interior knowledge, is a gift of the Spirit. In fact what we are praying for is the Holy Spirit, though he may seem strangely absent from the text. From the diary of Ignatius we see that he himself made the Triple Colloquy asking that he might receive the Spirit. And the Spirit, we know, is the token of God's acceptance of us.

Hence we might add to our earnest prayer a further petition for yet another triple grace: first, to realize that God accepts us in spite of our inadequacy and waywardness, and that precisely because he accepts us he wants us to

change to the point of being shaped after the image of his beloved Son; then, to accept ourselves, with our past, our present and our future, and to want to change not out of frustration but because of a great hope founded in God's gift of the Spirit of adoption; finally, to accept God in our lives, ever more fully, seeing him not as a threat, or an intrusion, but as the fulfilment of all that we need or could desire.

The long road of conversion

It is such a positive attitude, a full acceptance of God in our lives, that is the expected fruit of the First Week. Perhaps we should rather speak of an ever fuller acceptance, since there will always be room for more, for further progress. And this means that the First Week will always be relevant for us, no matter what may be our spiritual or moral state. There is no need to imagine ourselves as great sinners, or as anything other than our healthy conscience tells us that we are; it is enough that we recognize that we can and must do better.

For this we should realize that conversion is not just an event but a process: we are constantly being called to be perfectly generous as our heavenly Father is. Christian spirituality has paid great attention to various levels or stages in the experience of conversion, and so has the psychology of religion. And it is remarkable how science, studying the phenomenon from the outside, has come to conclusions that are similar to those of the great masters of the spiritual life.

Among such conclusions is the classification of conversion into three types, or three progressive degrees, which have been variously labelled: adolescent, adult and mystical conversion; or moral, intellectual and mystical conversion. An adolescent or moral conversion is the one that is commonly called conversion—namely, a change from a life of sin or of carelessness with regard to the moral law, to a position where one recognizes God as a *significant factor* in one's life, so that one would not deliberately break with him.

An adult or intellectual conversion corresponds to what spiritual writers sometimes refer to as second conversion. It is obviously a further step, a deeper realization of the reality of God, a more mature or wiser understanding, when one recognizes God as the *dominant factor* in life—that is, although other considerations also have their weight in decisions and general orientation, yet God is supreme and one would not go against anything that one regards as the will of God for oneself.

It is interesting to note that the third stage is generally called mystical, and that science is rather lost at this level, though it recognizes its existence. At this point, God becomes the *sole factor* in one's life and nothing else matters except as an extension of one's caring for God. Mystics have been known to feel quite lost with regard to practical affairs and even the most ordinary activities, when they come to this stage, till they settle down to it and can attend to everyday duties whilst being wholly absorbed in God.

Though the First Week could well lead to the third kind or degree of conversion, this is more properly regarded as the fruit of the whole retreat, as expressed in the Third Degree of Humility and in the final oblation of the Contemplation for attaining Love—at least to the extent that such a conversion can be realized without a special mystical grace. Indeed the whole retreat is a process of conversion, of coming out of ourselves, so as to be more alive to God and united to Christ, with ever greater freedom in the Spirit.

The idea of being free to live and to love could be said to pervade also the so-called Additions, or additional notes—though admittedly this could depend on how one understands them. They consist of small pieces of practical advice on prayer and penance which are placed at the end of the First Week but belong to the whole course of the Exercises.

One way of looking at the Additions could be to see them as the donning of a harness, complete with blinkers, in order to be more effective, to concentrate all one's attention

and efforts on the appointed task. In other words, they would be a freely accepted constraint in order to secure greater impact. But one could also regard them as devices for eliminating constraint, for blocking out all manner of illegitimate pressures on the senses and the mind, so that the spirit is free. One could find some justification for this kind of interpretation in the fact that in what has been called the review of the exercise, the retreatant has to examine not so much what he has done as what has happened, *how it has gone with me* (77).

It could be said in general that for Ignatius prayer is not what one does but what happens—like falling in love. Many things can help greatly towards falling in love: the right atmosphere, the right situation, and especially the sense of being made for each other—but ultimately it just happens. We have the assurance of our faith, that Christ and ourselves have been made for each other: *before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his in Christ* (Eph. 1:4). Between us and Christ there is already a fundamental being in love: *I have loved you—remain in my love* (Jo. 15:9). But for a more intense experience of this love, we can set the stage—and no more: it just happens.

A fresh look at penance

What setting the stage means in concrete, what particular measures we take or method of prayer we follow, will depend on a number of factors. Ignatius has abundant directives on this, throughout the Exercises, and we shall have occasion to speak further about them. For the present, we turn to penance, regarding which the Additions provide a miniature treatise. Some of it sounds rather quaint, as indeed might the whole subject of penance today. There are many reasons why people do not feel at ease with regard to this area of christian life. It would greatly help us to realize—that is, to make real to ourselves—that penance means conversion: in the Gospels it is *metanoia*, a change of heart, a turning to God. And this is true whether we think of penance as a virtue, or as an ascetical practice, or as a sacrament.

Penance means conversion; and conversion is a basic on-going process in the christian life, for it is the effort to live up to our baptismal commitment. In baptism we are wholly made over to God, plunged into the life of the Trinity. Nevertheless our experience testifies that there is much in us that is impervious to Christ. But the Spirit we have received is constantly at work, making effective the claim of Christ on us, and gaining us for God. Our responsibility is to collaborate with the Spirit; to acknowledge, and make more and more real in our lives, our total dependence on the Blessed Trinity.

A major obstacle to this collaboration is the illusion of self-sufficiency which we cultivate more or less consciously, in order to bolster up our sense of security. Pain or any kind of discomfort are a symptom of our insufficiency, for if we had in our control all the resources for our wellbeing, we would never suffer. Suffering by itself does not bring us to God, but it removes a great obstacle, for it is an inescapable reminder of our insufficiency and dependence, of our need to open up and not close in on ourselves. And this is how penance as an ascetical practice can help us turn to God. God does not gain anything by our depriving ourselves of something, but we can gain an opening, an access to God.

By helping us turn to God, penance compensates in some way, or makes up for our previous turning away. By opening us up, it enables us to receive graces that God is most willing to give if only we are ready for them. Moreover penance can restore whatever imbalance has been created in us by our self-indulgence. These are the three main fruits we can obtain from it. As for its actual practice, the Exercises would have us consider that besides the suffering that may come to us without the asking and that is usually the most effective, we can also voluntarily undergo privation. What we give up as penance should be—not what is necessary for our proper functioning—nor what is simply superfluous, for that must be got rid of anyway—but what is convenient: there are so many things that we may very well use and equally well dispense with, and this is the area where we can choose to practice penance.

But we must by all means avoid getting all tied up with the concern of what we are going to do without. That would be the very opposite of the freedom of spirit, and in the Spirit, which is what penance is all about. Let us rather cultivate the attitude that is inculcated right through the Exercises—the *indifference* of the Principle and Foundation, the *detachment* of the third in the Classes of Men—so that we do not have to be bargaining with ourselves, and much less with God, but feel truly free with regard to all created things. And this brings us to the last point.

Penance as a sacrament is the sacramentalizing of our effort to turn more fully to God—that is, it is a privileged encounter with Christ in this particular aspect of his saving work, namely, that he frees us from whatever can hold us back from the Father: *in him we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins* (Col. 1:14). The fruit of the sacrament is absolution—which does not mean forgiveness but liberation, or untying. To the extent that nothing ties us down more than actual sin, the state of sin becomes the special object of the sacramental grace; but the grace goes much farther, and its total effect is liberation. This obviously looks to the future rather than to the past, to what we want to do rather than to what we have done.

Traditionally this has been expressed by saying that the most important thing in the sacrament is the *purpose of amendment*. But in fact the accent fell heavily on *confession*, and the way in which this was practised not infrequently led to the very opposite of liberation, or there was a superficial sense of freedom without any real growth beyond the hoped-for *increase of grace*. Today a great deal is being done at all levels to restore the proper meaning and function of the sacrament of penance, to make it truly an ongoing conversion, an ever greater capacity for life and for love.

ALAS FOR THAT MAN

(Mt. 26: 24)

The call to conversion is a theme that runs through all the Scriptures. Jesus begins his mission with this call and at the end of his mortal life he is still struggling with the hardness of heart, the weakness and vacillation, of those who are his friends. The Bible has many precious lessons for the first phase of the retreat.

More in particular, the pain of Jesus at the failure of the apostles to stand by him in his hour of crisis should rouse us to a sense of personal responsibility in our relationship with God, and to a longing for the freedom that has been so dearly won for us on the Cross—as is proposed in the First Week of the Exercises.

The following reflections are numbered serially in continuation of the previous ones, for easier reference.

4—John 13: 21-30; and 2 Cor. 5: 8-21

Jesus exclaimed in deep agitation of spirit, 'In truth, in very truth I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.' The disciples looked at one another in bewilderment: whom could he be speaking of? One of them, the disciple he loved, was reclining beside Jesus. So Simon Peter nodded to him and said, 'Ask who it is he means.' That disciple, as he reclined, leaned back close to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus replied, 'It is the man to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, after dipping it in the dish, he took it out and gave it to Judas, son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas had received it Satan entered him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you have to do.' No one at the table understood what he meant by this. Some supposed that, as Judas was in charge of the common purse, Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the festival, or to make some gift to the poor. As soon as Judas had received the bread he went out. It was night.

*

Easily the best-loved and surely the best-known representation of the Last Supper is the fresco of Da Vinci: it has been reproduced in every conceivable material to provide a setting for sanctuaries and dining rooms. Yet it does not depict the institution of the Eucharist nor the paschal meal itself: from the gestures and the expressions it is clear that the moment captured in the painting is that of Jesus' agonizing revelation that one from his inner circle would betray him.

For Da Vinci as an artist this was far more dramatic, more startling and poignant, than that Jesus should give himself as food and drink—after all, his self-gift was in line with what he was known to be, totally a man for others; but precisely because he was what he was, it was totally incredible that one who had enjoyed his intimacy could let him down. The other apostles could not believe it, and even when they knew all too well the terrible truth they never quite accepted it, because they never understood.

But we are different; we have grown up with the story of Judas; he is part of our experience of Christ; we would miss

him if he were left out. And so it is with every betrayal of Christ; in itself it is inconceivable, a monstrous nightmare; but we have learnt to live with the idea—and with the reality. If we saw disloyalty as Christ sees it, we would reject it totally even whilst admitting it as a sad fact.

Judas himself seems hardly to believe what has happened: how could it have come to this? He had given himself sincerely to Christ. But he had some preconceived ideas about what attachment to Christ meant, and he was not ready to give these up as it became increasingly clear that Christ's ways were not his ways, nor Christ's thoughts his thoughts. So from little reservations came estrangement, and from growing estrangement a tragic rupture. He did not mean it, but he did it.

To Christ's total giving there can only be one answer, a total giving of ourselves: any other course is fraught with danger. We need to cultivate assiduously, with the aid of never-failing grace, the vision of Christ: to take to heart the horror of disloyalty; its foolishness too and futility, for it brings us nowhere—rather, it can lead to the saddest of consequences. We must cultivate this vision, and live it so that others too are helped to see clearly, in spite of so much that tends to blurr the issues they are struggling with. And Christ is always with us in our efforts.

*

It is all God's doing. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

5—Matthew 26: 20-25; and Col. 1: 20-23

In the evening he sat down with the twelve disciples; and during supper he said, 'I tell you this: one of you will betray me.' In great distress they exclaimed one after the other, 'Can you mean me, Lord?' He answered, 'One who has dipped his hand into this dish with me will betray me. The Son of Man is going the way appointed for him in the Scriptures; but alas for that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had never been born. Then Judas spoke, 'Can you mean me?' Jesus replied, 'The words are yours.'

*

There are no more terrible words in all Scripture than Jesus' simple statement of the fate of Judas. The prophets are far more vivid and even gruesome in their utterances; but here the very quietness chills the blood, and all the more when we consider who it is that speaks, and of whom.

Christian piety and ingenuity have striven through the ages to fathom the meaning of what was so barely said: does this mean that Judas is lost for ever? But we cannot say that with certainty of anyone. But then again, if he is not lost he is saved; eventually at least he will attain to eternal bliss: how then could it be better that he were not born?

The answer to this riddle seems to be that Jesus is not at all thinking of the eventual fate of Judas. He is not thinking of the consequences of his betrayal but of the terrible reality of the betrayal itself—for it is a terrible thing to betray Jesus, quite apart from what might happen to us as a result. The consequences, whatever they be, only help us to understand the intrinsic reality of the cause; especially when we consider that these consequences are not external to the cause, something that God, so to speak, goes out of his way to inflict on the betrayer; they are simply what the betrayer does to himself by the very act of betrayal; in fact he betrays himself in his deepest being, he destroys himself.

We may then say that there are three things to be taken very seriously, in descending order of importance: first,

what the sinner does to God, the rejection of his love; next, what the sinner does to himself, the immediate damage to his own person; finally, the ultimate result of a progressive rupture with God and with himself.

A great deal of attention has traditionally been paid to this last; and surely it is something that cannot be ignored. But we should be much more concerned about what leads to such a deplorable conclusion. Sin—any sin to the extent that it is a sin—initiates a process of disintegration in the sinner that is impressively externalized in physical death and dissolution, and that finds its culmination in what is comprehensively termed eternal damnation. Whatever that may be, it expresses a truth that must make us stop and think—and look back to where it all started. The terrible end does not make the beginning terrible, it merely shows it to be so and totally to be rejected. We cannot cheat God and bring him round to our way of thinking. It remains for us to see things as he sees them, and to act accordingly.

And it may help us to remember that the ultimate and most terrible consequence of sin is that God died. And by dying he saved us. We may well fix our gaze on this ultimate and decisive consequence: Christ on the cross, and ask ourselves whether this will not be the starting point of a new series of consequences, a reversal of the process of dissolution, a building up of our lives in Christ.

*

Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood upon the cross—to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, through him alone. Formerly you were yourselves estranged from God; you were his enemies in heart and mind, and your deeds were evil. But now by Christ's death in his body of flesh and blood, God has reconciled you to himself, so that he may present you before himself as dedicated persons, without blemish and innocent in his sight. Only you must continue in your faith, firm on your foundations, never to be dislodged from the hope offered in the gospel which you heard.

6—Mark 14: 27-31; and Eph. 1: 16-20

And Jesus said: 'You will all fall from your faith; for it stands written: "I will strike the shepherd down and the sheep will be scattered." Nevertheless, after I am raised again I will go on before you into Galilee'. Peter answered. 'Everyone else may fall away, but I will not.' Jesus said, 'I tell you this: today, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you yourself will disown me three times.' But he insisted and repeated: 'Even if I must die with you, I will never disown you.' And they all said the same.

*

Judas is not the only one, unfortunately, who failed Christ; all the apostles did so, but one other among them stands out precisely because he was in so many ways outstanding: Peter. Here too we ask in astonishment how it could have happened. And the answer is, paradoxically, because he loved Jesus.

Peter was sincere when he professed undying loyalty to Jesus—he expressed what he really felt; he followed the dictates of his heart when he turned his steps, with John after the flight from the garden, and with him entered the High Priest's courtyard; and there he fell. It is a dangerous thing to be deeply attached to Jesus. It is dangerous to have a rich personality like Peter's, generous, outgoing, born for leadership, and with that genius for spontaneous self-expression which can gather up in one pregnant phrase the sentiments of all: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe!

These endowments and achievements are dangerous unless accompanied by yet other qualities and attainments at a deeper level: a penetrating self-knowledge and a sensitive grasp of the things of God. These Peter lacked, and Jesus rebuked and admonished him more than once. He had to learn the hard way, through failure, humility, penitence: the Lord turned and looked straight at Peter, and he remembered; he went outside and wept bitterly.

He remembered all his life, and according to tradition he wept all his life, at cockcrow. He did not have in his day what is so easily, perhaps too easily, available to so

many of us now: all manner of means, provided by modern psychology, to arrive at a better understanding of oneself, to correct defects of character or come to terms with the limitations of our total make-up. It would be a pity not to make use of what can conveniently be had, for we might thus be helped greatly in our spiritual progress. But a purely natural effectiveness could in fact work against our best supernatural interests, and the interests of the Kingdom.

What Peter did have, and what all of us can and must have, is the guidance of the Spirit which, according to Christ's promise, can lead us to the fullness of truth—about God, about ourselves, about the world around us, with all its opportunities and pitfalls. For this Spirit we must pray, invoking the intercession of the Virgin Mary. She is the perfect model of docility, of transparency, to the light of the Spirit whom Jesus prayed the Father to send us—to be with us for ever, to teach us all things and remind us of all that Jesus himself has taught us. In that Spirit we shall find true peace. The world cannot give us that peace; and there is much within ourselves that could disturb it. But there is healing and strength too in the brightness of the Spirit, and it is his task to build us up into the image of God's beloved Son.

*

I remember you in my prayers, and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him. I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. This power in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death, and seated him at his right side in heaven.

4. ORIENTATION

It is now generally accepted that the aim of the Exercises is to bring the retreatant to a meaningful and transforming experience of Christ. This is not contrary to Ignatius' own initial statement that the purpose is to find and embrace the will of God, for the will of God is precisely that we should be conformed to the image of his Son and animated by his Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can penetrate and win over to God certain areas of our lives and depths of our being where no divine commandment or evangelical counsel or ecclesiastical rule or personal resolution can reach.

Speaking more in particular, the will of God for us is not just something that he decided from all eternity in our regard, and which we must now discover and conform ourselves to. His will is that we act as free agents, enjoying the freedom he bestows on his children and taking responsible decisions. We might apply here, and with greater reason, a principle that is increasingly recognized in secular activity: that today, given the uncertainty of so many elements in the situations that we have to face, there are hardly such

things as right and wrong decisions, but rather, right and wrong ways of taking decisions.

The right way of taking decisions in the spiritual life is to be christlike in our attitude to any situation—and that is God's will for us: that we be oriented by the Spirit of Christ. Now a sovereign way to be christlike, provided by God himself, is to encounter Christ in the Gospels. This is also the chief way that the Exercises propose for seeking, finding and embracing the will of God. The greater part of the retreat is expressly concerned with encountering Christ in the Gospels and imbibing his Spirit, with progressing in interior knowledge of the Lord.

So once again using *interior knowledge* as a key, in this section we shall look at the first phase of the Second Week, which opens with a transition exercise on the Kingdom, or the Call of the King. After some general reflections on the contemplation of the mysteries of the life of Christ, and the material that is provided for this, we shall go on to the subject of prayer, with special reference to the Application of the Senses and the Three Methods of Prayers, or three ways of praying.

PATTERNED AFTER THE SON

As an introduction to the gospel narrative, and to draw the retreatant to christlikeness, Ignatius presents a symbolic picture of Christ which is very much drawn from his own life-experience: we refer to the Christ of the Kingdom. The intention is obviously to put forward an impressive and supremely attractive personality; and we may well ask how far this gets across to a modern exercitant: what is a king today, even in the best of circumstances; and what is the glamour of a military enterprise?

To enter into the spirit of the call of Christ as conceived by Ignatius, it may help to cast a glance at the way in which human greatness has been thought of through the ages. Speaking very much in general, we may say that in ancient times greatness was associated, and practically identified, with a high position in society: the one who was on top was great, as long as he stayed on top. In the middle ages we find the accent shifting from position to achievement: one who performed feats of valour and subdued his foes was great, even if he remained just a knight errant. Later still, we find the stress on the qualities from which great deeds flow rather than on the deeds themselves: the great figures of the early modern age were geniuses who could put their hand to almost anything—art, science, philosophy, politics.

In all this we can notice a certain progress towards what we would call an interiorisation of greatness. And we go a step farther now and say that ultimate greatness does not lie so much in the qualities that make a person outstandingly different from others, but rather in a basic attitude that makes one have more things in common with more people. Or, as it has been said, a great person is one who does not make others feel small, but rather makes them feel that they too are great.

The composite image that Ignatius presents through the analogy of a temporal king combines all the above elements:

Christ occupies an eminent position (*chosen by our Lord God, revered and obeyed—92*); he envisages a great achievement (*I am determined to bring under my control the entire land. . .—93*); he has the most admirable qualities (*a king so generous and understanding—94*). But above all he is willing to share on terms of equality (*He must labour with me during the day and help watch at night—93*); and there is no doubt that the emphasis in the call of the King is entirely on this sharing (*he who would come with me must labour with me, so that following me in hardship he follow also in glory—95*).

It need hardly be recalled that the capacity and readiness to share is today regarded as the secret and the measure of the development of a healthy, lovable and effective personality. Indeed sharing is of the very essence of being a person—if we rightly understand what it means to be a person.

Most of us made the acquaintance very early in life of the classical theological distinction between nature and person. We did not understand much about it, and probably still do not, but it was some way of coming to terms with the fundamental mysteries of our faith, the Trinity and the Incarnation. Today, psychology finds new meaning and validity in the old distinction, and regards it as something very relevant to our understanding of ourselves. In us too there is a difference between our nature, which is the animal-rational composite that we have in common with the whole human race, and our person, which is the indefinable I that is uniquely myself. I am not my nature; rather, my nature belongs to me.

Most important, from the practical point of view, is that our nature—that is, our body with its organs and senses, and our soul with its faculties—can only grow, develop, mature, find fulfilment, by a process of acquisition: we consume food and drink, we grasp facts, we master skills; but our person, our ultimate self, can find fulfilment and perfection only by the very opposite process: we grow as persons to the extent that we go out of ourselves, relate to others and are willing to serve, to share and to sacrifice ourselves. This brings a tension in our beings that is at the root of all human problems, from the most intimate to the

most public ones: we are afraid to let go of what we hold as our own, to venture out of our limitations, lest we lose everything, lest we lose ourselves; yet deep down we know that we shall not find peace, joy, satisfaction, and happiness unless we open up to others.

Jesus of Nazareth comes through

We know where our true happiness lies, but we are afraid. And Christ comes to our rescue, with encouragement, with a challenge and a constant invitation to generosity: *Do not be afraid... Why are you anxious?... Give, and there will be gifts for you... Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest... He who would save himself will be lost... I have given you an example...* This is the Christ of the Gospels—and Christ is what the Exercises are all about.

We have moved far from the fundamentalist position that holds that everything in the Gospel is an objective statement of a historical fact; and we are getting accustomed to the idea that the Gospel is precisely what it says: the Good News—a joyous proclamation of the triumph of the risen Lord, in the light of which every incident is seen and presented. This view lends itself to a subjective interpretation of much of the narrative, and has obviously to be handled with care. Without entering into this delicate question, we could safely state for our present purpose that whatever else they may be, the Gospels are the communication of an experience—which is supremely the experience of the risen Lord, but precisely as the same Jesus of Nazareth who had eaten and drunk with his friends, whom they had seen and heard and touched with their hands, whom they knew to have died.

One hears a great deal nowadays about a style in the communication of personal experiences that is regarded as absolutely objective, as well as fair and honest. That is when one says: *What I hear you saying is... the way you come across to me is...* Given a basic good will—without which, as we have said, there is no personal communication at

all—statements like these are unassailable in their veracity. Moreover, if there is agreement among many people about the way a certain person comes across to them then we have reliable knowledge of that person; we have objective information in the sense that personal knowledge can be objective.

One of the things that the Gospel narrative tells us, and tells us all the time, is the way that Jesus came across to a great many people, what they heard him saying—and they were indeed a remarkable number and variety of people, considering the short span of his public life. As we page through the Gospels, with that openness and acceptance which is the beginning of communication and of faith, we find one or other situation that has some resemblance to ours—and Jesus comes across to us, we hear him saying something to us, in word or deed or attitude.

We then warm up to his personality; we discover more and more incidents and encounters that have a message for us. And gradually we realize that no matter what the situation, and the way that Jesus responds to it—it is always the same Jesus that comes across. He may be tender or strong, he may weep or smile, he may blaze with anger—but he is always the man who cares terribly: he cares for people and cares for God, he cares for me with God's own caring. And more: he wants me to be a caring person; to be concerned for others; even to be a channel of his own healing and wholeness; to be an apostle, sharing his life and mission.

The experience of Christ in the Gospel comes to a peak point of intensity and intimacy at the Last Supper. It is hardly credible that in a long farewell discourse Jesus actually uttered all the words attributed to him by St John—but there is no doubt that that is the way that he came across to the apostles on that privileged occasion, especially as they looked back and pondered on it.

And the farewell was a peak point in another sense too; for it marked the transition from a more obvious kind of closeness to a less sensible but much more real and intimate presence in their lives. To employ the terminology of the

Exercises, the Apostles' interior knowledge of the Lord deepened to the point of becoming, supremely, communion. And the abiding symbol of this newer and tighter bond is the Eucharist, which is also the assurance that this interior knowledge, the ultimate experience of Christ, is available to all his disciples down the ages.

Awareness of the divine presence

The whole subject of religious experience has had a checkered career in the history of christian spirituality. Of course, mystical experience has always been much appreciated, but precisely as something extraordinary. For the ordinary run of the faithful, the insistence has been rather on the practices of the christian life, including the reception of the sacraments, regarding which the great concern had to be that they be validly administered.

There have been different reasons at different times, for playing down the element of experience in christian life, but a fairly persistent one seems to have been the very way of conceiving experience, which like everything else concerning human beings, has been dominated by the understanding of man as a rational animal. Let us explain this by speaking, first of all, about presence. What do we mean when we say someone is present?

With the rational-animal approach, we distinguish two kinds of presence: physical presence, which is regarded as real, when someone is actually there, and intentional presence, which is a kind of poor substitute for the other, when someone is merely thought of. But in fact, what is decisive for presence is awareness: the pieces of furniture in a room are not present to each other because there is no mutual awareness; they are present to us because we are aware of them. Now people can be aware of each other not only when they are separated by long distances but even when their minds are occupied with something else: two persons who love one another have a mutual awareness that affects all their activity no matter where they may be or what they might be doing; then they are really present to each other.

Obviously, when there is an impact on the senses there is usually more awareness, and to that extent, a more real presence; but it is always awareness that is decisive—and this awareness, may not even reach the level of consciousness; it is enough that it affect one's being in some way, and even the unconscious can do that. A simple example may clarify this point: if the temperature drops suddenly in the middle of the night, I may pull up a blanket without waking up: I am aware of the cold, otherwise I would not react; but I am not conscious, for I am asleep.

Moreover, such awareness enters into our experience. To love and to be loved is an experience, even when nothing is being done. We may come to know that we are loved because something is done, and because we love we may do something; but love is fundamentally a relationship, an attitude; and it is always an awareness that can profoundly affect all our activity and everyone of our experiences.

Yet, according to the traditional animal-rational understanding of human beings, experience is either sensible or internal; in the latter case it is in the mind, but still dependent on external impressions, according to the classical dictum that there can be nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses. Since God is an immaterial being, he does not make an impression on the senses and there can be no experience of God. Mystical experience belongs to a different order and comes through an extraordinary grace; the most one can hope for ordinarily is an experience of the things of God, of things that come from God and from which one can deduce the presence of God. Such views can still be found in current philosophical manuals.

But we come to a different position if we think in terms of an awareness at the personal level: our awareness of God's love may be aroused by some external event that manifests his concern for us—indeed any and every external event, and every experience no matter how negative in itself, should manifest God's love, since we know that he is present in all that happens to us and that he makes all things work together for the advantage of those who love him: but this mutual love between God and us goes beyond any manifesta-

tion and is an abiding experience transforming all our experiences into an experience of God.

Let us make it clear that this experience is usually at the level of awareness, not of consciousness. The latter would indeed require a special grace. But the awareness that is ordinarily available can be very intense and have a marked effect. Ignatius gives us some idea of what he understands by an experience of God, in its various forms and degrees of intensity, when he speaks in the Exercises of what he calls spiritual consolation:

Spiritual consolation: consolation is the name I give to any interior movement experienced by the soul, causing it to glow with love for its Creator and Lord, the effect of which is that it can no longer love any earthly creature for itself, but only in the Creator of them all. The name also applies to the shedding of tears, either out of sorrow for sin or for the sufferings of Christ our Lord, or for other reasons directly concerned with his service and praise. Lastly, consolation is the name I give to any growth in faith, hope and charity, or any interior joy that invites or draws a man to heavenly and spiritual progress, so that he rests quietly in his Creator and Lord (316).

The quest of closer intimacy

This resting quietly is not an activity; it is rather a cessation of activity; it is a state, an attitude, a loving relationship. And it is prayer in the deepest sense of the word. For prayer, like love, is not primarily doing something: it is being with God in all the many ways in which two persons who greatly care for one another can be present to each other. Such mutual presence can indeed express itself in, and it can be fostered by, all manner of activity; but activity can also be an obstacle to a more intimate presence; it can prevent communication from ripening into communion.

We are so often tempted to substitute some activity for real communion, because we are afraid of intimacy. We do this with others, we do it with God. As a remedy for this, and as a gentle invitation just to rest quietly in God, Ignatius proposes what he calls the Application of the Senses, to be practised at the end of each day dedicated to the contemplation of the life of Christ.

There are not a few directors who pass over this exercise in embarrassed silence, and there are many regular retreatants who have not so much as heard of it in the course of many years. In fact, from the very beginning there has been a difference of opinion about the understanding and consequent appreciation of this practice: some would hold that it is a lesser form of prayer reserved for the end of a tiring day, a sort of spiritual doodling that keeps the mind from wandering too far without at the same time taxing it with a further effort; others on the contrary, among whom are some of Ignatius' closest associates, regard it as a higher form of prayer, the climax of the day's activity.

Ignatius himself is responsible for some confusion, for he speaks of the senses of the imagination, seeming to imply a less intellectual activity, whilst in the course of his explanation he gives the impression of referring to some sort of spiritual senses. His language, as is well known, is always inadequate for what he wants to communicate; but in this case he can hardly be blamed, for even today we have not yet developed a satisfactory vocabulary for expressing personal realities, and often have recourse to a terminology that is proper to the senses and the feelings. We would venture to suggest that the senses in this case have to be understood in the typical ignatian meaning of *sentir*. Hence what Ignatius has in mind are neither bodily nor intellectual senses but rather personal senses, and the exercise he is proposing is concerned not with an activity but with an attitude, an abiding attitude of openness to Christ, of total response to his person, a keeping in tune with him.

We may understand this by calling to mind what happens in a happy and united family—or used to happen before the days of television—at the end of the day, after supper had been cleared away and the dish-washing completed. There might have been a lot of talking when the children came back from school or a game, and at table when dad recounted some incident at the office. But all is quiet now, each one is in his or her corner doing his or her own thing: homework, some mending, files to be gone through, what-

ever. All are intent on their task, but there is a tremendous mutual awareness, they are very much present to each other.

A friend might drop in. If he is a really intimate friend, hardly anything may be said or done; he just settles down in a corner himself, basking in the warmth of love with which the atmosphere is so obviously charged. Always, the more familiar the person that comes in, the less need there is for anything to happen at his entrance: communion is established immediately without need of elaborate communication. Moreover, the communion can be its own resource—feeding on itself, so to speak—and growing on its own experience whilst it helps to growth in all the dimensions of life. But occasional express manifestations of love, and gestures of affection and of caring, will always have a place in human relationship.

Method and substance in prayer

All this is true in our relationship with God, and prayer must always be, first and foremost, communion with God. Everything else is an aid to communion and intimacy. This is the lesson to be learnt from the Application of the Senses. All the other methods of prayer proposed in the Exercises, and there are many, are also just an aid to intimacy—and *intimacy* would be another way of translating *interior knowledge* or *el sentir y gustar de las cosas internamente*.

There may indeed be times when this intimacy looks like a mocking mirage in the desert, whilst we are dying of thirst. We are dry and distracted; and we are discouraged. If prayer is something that happens—well, nothing happens. In such a situation it may help us to remember that with regard to God there is a kind of awareness that is shared by the whole of creation, even inanimate nature. Without this minimal response to the divine presence, a thing would not even exist. This kind of rudimentary awareness we can and do have, always. It is a very humble response, only a beginning. But what better beginning to prayer than a humble response to God? Let us thank him for it—and carry on from there.

And we can carry on, because in fact our starting point is much more promising than what has been indicated just above. We are not mere creatures of God; we are his children, and he has given us his Spirit to aid our weakness and conform us to the image of his Son: *when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the Spirit himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and that the pleas of the saints expressed by the Spirit are according to the mind of God. We know that by turning everything to their good, God cooperates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose* (Rom. 8: 26-28).

When it seems that nothing happens, let us give the Spirit a chance, and not disturb him with our fretting. We should note that dryness and distraction are not what Ignatius calls desolation—that means a real distaste, a positive disgust, for spiritual things. If we long for God, no matter how distressed or depressed we may be, we are not in desolation. And if we love God, everything will turn to our advantage. On the other hand, without attachment to God, the search for methods of prayer is like picking up techniques for making love without any affection in the heart.

There is a great hunt on these days for methods of prayer, with people literally going round the world to find something that will really satisfy. The christian tradition is being enriched with borrowings from other religions. Modern communications media have been successfully harnessed to facilitate contact with God. It has been found that even the large repertoire of the Exercises can profit by further additions. All this is most heartening and praiseworthy, as the expression of a keen desire to grow in the love of God. But even so, it must be remembered that all this can but prepare the ground—set the stage, as we said before.

It is interesting to note what Ignatius says in outlining the Three Methods of Prayer, which he proposes as being within the capacity of anyone, even outside the course of the retreat. He introduces the first one saying that it is not a method of prayer at all but only some way of tuning up, *so that the prayer becomes acceptable* (238). Ultimately, the best

preparation for prayer, indeed an indispensable condition according to ignatian principles, is freedom of spirit and in the Spirit, so that the Spirit can take possession of us and himself be our prayer. This requires self-discipline, which is well expressed in generous service, in a life lived for God and for others.

When all is said and done, the example of Jesus in the Gospel is more powerful and enlightening in this matter than any argument or prescription. He was always with his Father, but he joined in the worship of his community; he was always available to others, but he found time for solitary communion—he made the time for it, sometimes at night (Lk. 6:12) or very early in the morning (Mk. 1:35), because he felt the need.

We do need to set time aside to be alone with God. This is an imperative of our human condition rather than a theological requirement. And we may be well advised to use a method, or to try several. This is a matter of experience. But beyond being an exercise, our prayer must be a quality of our life, enabling us—to use Ignatius' favourite phrase—to find God in all things.

I HAVE CHOSEN YOU **(Jo. 15:16)**

If interior knowledge of the Lord, through a prayerful pondering of the Gospel, is the main concern of the retreat, then reflection on the Last Supper and the various events connected with it should hold a privileged place in the contemplation of the mysteries of the life of Christ, for there the apostles' experience of their Master comes to a climax.

The farewell of Jesus is both the culmination and the explicitation of his growing intimacy with his disciples; it is also the inauguration of a new kind of relationship that is less obvious but more effective, and in which we all share—as is progressively made clear in the Second Week of the Exercises.

In the following reflections one passage is taken from each of the three chapters in John that contain the last discourse.

7—John 14: 6-12; and Col. 1: 9-14

Jesus said: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me. If you know me, you know my Father too. From this moment you know him and have seen him.' Philip said, 'Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied.' 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip,' said Jesus to him, 'and you still do not know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father, so how can you say, "Let us see the Father?" Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak as from myself: it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his own work. You must believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; believe on the evidence of the deeds, if for no other reason. I tell you in all seriousness, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father.'

*

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He has come that we might have life and have it to the full. Whoever belongs to the truth hears his voice, and the truth will make him free. Indeed, Jesus is the fulfilment of all the human heart craves for, and he is that not in some vague, idealistic sense, as the words Truth and Life seem to suggest, but very concretely, very tangibly, very attractively.

For he does not stand at a remote point, at the far end of our earthly journey; rather, he is himself the way that leads to the ultimate goal—a long way that we shall never entirely cover but along which we must always progress, constantly facing new challenges and making fresh discoveries, ever ready to hear—though not necessarily as a reproach—those haunting words: So long have I been with you and you still do not know me?

Intimacy with Jesus is an unending adventure; and the more intense our experience of him, the deeper we penetrate the mystery of God. Anyone who keeps Jesus' commandments will be loved by the Father, and Jesus will show himself to him; and anyone who sees Jesus sees the Father.

This seeing the Father is not, of course, a sensible perception, nor even just an intellectual grasp of the reality of God. It is an awareness of the divine presence in us, in our life and activity, in the world around us. And this awareness will be in the measure of our christlikeness; whilst the christlikeness will itself be in the measure of our faithfulness to the commandment that Christ enjoins on us, not so much in words as by his example, that we love one another as he has loved us, that we give ourselves to others in service and in sacrifice.

Jesus was totally the Man for Others. He was also totally the Man of God. Though he was deeply conscious that the Father was in him and he in the Father, he had a felt need, as man, to withdraw occasionally from the company of others and to be alone with God. He has taught us how to pray, and how to draw inspiration and strength from our contact with God. If we believe in him, we shall be effective as he was effective; indeed we shall achieve even more than he did, according to his own promise.

He is supremely the Man on a Mission; and he puts before us a vast programme of action: to continue his own mission on earth, to be instruments of reconciliation for all mankind. For this he gives us his Spirit, and he invites us to share with him both in trials and in triumph.

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What we ask God is that through perfect wisdom and spiritual understanding you should reach the fullest knowledge of his will. So you will be able to lead the kind of life which the Lord expects of you, a life acceptable to him in all its aspects; showing the results in all the good actions you do and increasing your knowledge of God. You will have in you the strength, based on his own glorious power, never to give in, but to bear anything joyfully, thanking the Father who has made it possible for you to join his holy people and with them to inherit the light. Because that is what he has done: he has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins.

8—John 15: 1-5, 15-17; and Eph. 3: 14-19

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears abundant fruit; for cut off from me you can do nothing.'

'I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father. You did not choose me; no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. What I command you is to love one another.'

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In various contexts and in a variety of ways Jesus has spoken of the intimate union between himself and his disciples, but nowhere in such telling detail as when he elaborates the comparison of the vine and the branches: there is in it a whole theology and a complete programme of spiritual life, spiritual activity and spiritual growth—all understood and realized in terms of Christ.

In particular, Christ gives us an insight into the very positive meaning of the seemingly negative aspects of christian spirituality: the pruning, the mortification. What is pruned is the dead weight we carry, so that the process is really one of vivification, of being more alive and productive. Discipline is for greater freedom, and freedom is for effectiveness in the only way in which it is meaningful to be effective, namely, by contributing to the realization of God's plan for creation.

For this it is that Christ has chosen us; and in this choice lies the whole sense of our lives. We shall be most truly ourselves to the extent that our own deliberate choice coincides with the choice made by Christ, as we come to

understand it ever more clearly and adhere to it ever more loyally, with a loyalty that extends to all those whom Christ loves, to all our brothers and sisters the world over.

And to ask the Father in the name of Christ is much more than to end our prayers with the traditional liturgical formula: through Christ our Lord. The name stands for the very person of Christ, and we shall obtain what we ask in the measure in which our petitions are christlike and in tune with the dispositions of Christ. What we are called to is perfect christlikeness, in our attitude to God and our attitude to our fellow human beings. This is both very easy and very difficult. It makes great demands on us, but it is certainly possible; and it is very necessary.

It is possible because Jesus has given us his Spirit to be our support, and he will lead us into all truth. The ultimate truth is the mystery of God; concretely it is the realization—that is, the making real in our lives—that God alone is God, that his claims on us are not just supreme but absolute: to begin to understand this claim is great progress; to live it is perfection.

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This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name: Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your inner self to grow strong, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith: and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.

9—John 16: 19-24; and Rom. 8: 35-39

Jesus knew that they wanted to question him, so he said, 'You are asking one another what I meant by saying: "In a short time you will no longer see me, and then a short time later you will see me again." In very truth I tell you, you will be weeping and wailing while the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. A woman in childbirth suffers, because her time has come; but when she has given birth to the child she forgets the suffering in her joy that a man has been born into the world. So it is with you: you are sad now, but I shall see you again, and your hearts will be full of joy, and that joy no one shall take from you. When that day comes, you will not ask me any questions. In very truth I tell you, anything you ask for from the Father he will grant in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and so your joy will be complete.'

*

Jesus realizes only too well how deeply disturbed and grieved the apostles are by the quite unforeseen and very painful developments at this Pasch, and he goes all out to put heart into them. Regardless of himself, who is the most affected by what is happening, he is entirely concerned about them and their felt need for support and encouragement.

But he does nothing to minimize the trials that lie ahead, both now and more remotely, and he elaborates the theme that they can expect for themselves all the terrible things he had foretold in his own regard: they will not escape the tragedy of this world which their Master has taken on himself; but their joy and their triumph lie in this, that by accepting all the painful consequences of man's rupture with God, Jesus has transformed these consequences into the very means of healing the rupture, of entering more fully into the friendship of God and the plenitude of divine blessings. If we suffer like Christ and with Christ, our sorrow will be turned to joy.

This paradox of divine condescension is most strikingly seen in what, according to Scripture, is the most striking effect of sin: death. The saving death of Christ has changed the very meaning and function of death so that it has become the gateway to a fuller and more satisfying life.

But less strikingly this principle is at work in the whole of human existence, in every heartache and every experience of limitation—for those who love God, everything is an advantage, everything is gain; and nothing can separate us from this love of God that becomes accessible to all in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Even from a purely human point of view, it is said that so much depends on our attitude: a given situation will appear, and will in fact be, a great opportunity or a frustrating obstacle, according as we approach it positively or negatively. How much more true it is that when looked at with the eyes of faith, every circumstance will be seen as a gift from the loving hands of God—even when no amount of human effort could make it be anything but a painful experience.

This is the hope, this the confidence, the courage and enthusiasm that Christ has won for us by his pain and supreme sacrifice. Sophisticated people no longer talk glibly of the death of God. Hopefully some day they will awake to the fact that God did die and by dying gave us life.

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Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. As Scripture says: "For your sake we are being massacred daily and reckoned as sheep for the slaughter." These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us. For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

5. DECISION

According to the traditional view, the whole of the Exercises is geared to the so-called Election, or decision, in accordance with the avowed purpose of *seeking and finding the divine will in the ordering of one's life* [1]. But there are those who maintain that the entire section on the Election is an independent unit which just happens to be inserted for convenience between the Second and Third Weeks; and one of their arguments is that this part has a preamble of its own.

It is true that the section that begins with the Preamble for making an Election (169) is self-contained. But so are the Examinations of Conscience and the Methods of Prayer; and more than these, the Election fits in precisely where it is placed. Anyhow, this is rather an academic question. More worthy of attention is another way of taking the Election out of the Exercises, and that is by the practice of discernment outside the context of the retreat. We do not mean just out of the time of retreat, but without reference to the principles inculcated in the Exercises and the dispositions required there.

There is a danger that discernment—and in particular, community discernment—becomes just a popular game, complete with a handbook of complicated rules. Community discernment does not appear in the Exercises at all—but it is quite ignatian, provided it is done in the right spirit; and whilst a definite method is useful, and even necessary for a group that wants to work in harmony, the important thing is the attitudes we bring to this practice. And these attitudes cannot be just put on for the occasion. There must be constant sensitivity to the Spirit of Christ, delicately nursed by a ceaseless quest of interior knowledge of the Lord, and the discipline that it demands. In the following pages we shall deal with the whole latter portion of the Second Week, which begins with the Preamble for the Consideration of States (135) or Introduction to an Examination of Different States of Life.

Still using *interior knowledge* as a key to interpretation, we shall pay special attention to the great meditations on the Two Standards and the Three Classes (or Pairs) of Men, and the consideration of the Three Degrees of Humility or Three Ways of Subjection. The various sets of Rules given chiefly at the end of the book, including those for Discernment, will also be treated here.

AGLOW WITH THE SPIRIT

Among the notes concerning Election there is an indication of three times, or situations, in which one can make a wholesome decision: the first is when there is a clear manifestation from God about which one cannot doubt; the last is when one makes use of one's natural powers, obviously aided by grace, and through a rational assessment of all the elements involved comes to a commonsense conclusion. The second situation lies in the middle, in more senses than one: it involves a tuning in to what God is saying in the depths of oneself, feeling one's way, so to speak, till one arrives at *sufficient clarity* (176) and can act upon it with confidence.

It has always been recognized that the first instance, that of a clear manifestation from God, is of rare occurrence. We may indeed have a clear idea, leading to a firm conviction, about what we must do; but that this comes from God may not be so sure and would have to be checked in some practical way to eliminate the possibility of illusion. So there is still need of the commonsense approach of the third instance. But today it is increasingly being realized that commonsense itself is not just a matter of rational assessment; inevitably we also consult our feelings, we give due weight to hunches, we have a high regard for intuitions.

So, almost invariably, we find ourselves in the second situation where we have to tune in to something deep within us and there pick up the authentic voice of God, in the midst of all sorts of sounds, of atmospherics and other interferences, that can disturb our reception. The retreat is a privileged time for exercising ourselves in the art of listening in to God, but this is an art that we need to practice every day, and indeed at every moment of our lives. At present, we understand better than ever that doing the will of God is not so much a question of discovering once and for all what he from eternity decided about us, as rather

of a constant attentiveness to how he wants us to decide freely for ourselves here and now. As has been remarked earlier, the problem we often face is not of a right or wrong choice but of having the right attitude and dispositions when making a choice.

This is what Ignatius was very much concerned about. From various documents we know that he assiduously practiced discernment; and we know how he went about it. In the Exercises, after speaking of times or situations for Election, he goes on to outline some methods or ways for making it in what he calls the third time. There is no way prescribed for the second time, which is where discernment comes in; the Rules for Discernment do not provide a method, but some principles and practical directives. But we do find very much in the whole book about the spirit or attitude of discernment, and this could best be explained by referring back to what has been said earlier about how our character, and the pattern of our response to reality, are shaped.

At the heart of discernment

Our first response to our environment is at the level of feelings. These feelings, once aroused, condition our subsequent responses and can themselves be conditioned by new responses. Gradually they tend to settle down to a stable, fairly coherent pattern that does not easily change: we acquire certain habits, mannerisms, tastes. When the reasoning faculty comes into play, there is mutual reaction between feelings and judgements and these latter also settle down in a pattern: we have definite ideas about certain things; convictions, prejudices. These patterns to a great extent determine our habitual attitudes, which are also influenced by the unconscious in us. The whole scheme of behaviour that is thus established is our character or personality, which guide our ordinary reactions to reality—to persons, things, situations.

Hopefully, the various elements that make up our character are well integrated in one complete and harmonious pattern of response. Otherwise we shall be constantly restless and dissatisfied. But even if there is integration and

harmony, the different elements could react differently in face of a particular situation that affects us deeply. For instance: I am offered a new, important job. My present objective judgement tells me that this thing in front of me is good, desirable, to be accepted; but a set pattern of prejudices, or some fear from the past, of which I am not entirely conscious, holds me back. A counsellor can help to distinguish the various reactions and to see the reason for them; and to make a clear option in favour of what is positive, what is more genuinely myself; and to integrate the rest into it, so that I can make a total, wholesome response.

An integrated positive approach is required and sufficient for mental health. But our spiritual wellbeing calls for something more—a higher integration, and a positiveness in terms of God. If we want to strive for this more complete wholeness, it will help us to recall that even deeper and more firmly set than the pattern that makes our natural character, there is another character,—a *seal* in the language of St Paul—which has been stamped on us at baptism and is none other than the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is in the depths of us, working in us a positive response to God: *Abba, Father!* (Rom. 8: 15). But this dialogue at the very centre of our being is drowned by the clamour of so many other responses at other levels that we are often unaware even of its existence.

It was with the cry of *Abba!* that Jesus made a breakthrough to the will of the Father, when he was overwhelmed with confusion in his agony. The grace-aided effort of the retreat is directed to making us attentive to the Spirit and faithful to the Seal of our baptism; to bringing the other set patterns in line with this basic orientation; to eliminating *all disorderly affections* (1), as far as possible even the less conscious ones; to clearing the channels of communication with God. This process would include the shedding away not only of all sin and sinfulness, but of other obstacles, such as various hang-ups or just inadequate theological concepts, that we may have picked up in the course of our growing up.

The ideal is that everything in us is coherent with the Spirit of adoption we have received as children of God, and that as God is present and active in all reality, so we are

responsive to God in all our experience. This must be realized not so much at the level of any idea or of any particular action, though that is not excluded, but chiefly at the level of a basic attitude that permeates all activity. What is expected of a Christian is not so much thinking or doing this or that, as being alive to God in Christ Jesus.

As long as this ideal is not achieved, we must at least be aware of the lines along which communication is defective, of blind spots where vision is blurred. This is discernment—to recognize what is authentic and what is not, in our experience, in our initial responses, in our *consolation and desolation* (176). That is what Ignatius provides his Rules for.

The Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (314-336) are in the line of a great christian tradition, and it is this same tradition that provides their theological setting; but they are very much the fruit of Ignatius' own experience, and of his reflection on it, beginning with the earliest experience when he was convalescing in Loyola, as he himself testifies. Modern psychology would bear out the wisdom of much that he says, and also have some reservations. One obvious question mark is about the basic concept of being under the influence of good and evil spirits. But the concern of Ignatius is not so much for what is moving us but where we are moving to: he suggests practical ways of checking whether we are tuning in to God, or the contrary. It may also be mentioned here that today the regular examination of conscience is recognized as an exercise of on-going discernment, and appropriately referred to as examination of consciousness, of our awareness of God.

Principles and practice in options

Within the retreat, some special exercises are provided to aid in discernment. Of these, the best known and most typically ignatian is the meditation on the Two Standards. One would have to strip it of its chivalric trappings to make it palatable to a contemporary Christian. But apart from this cumbersome framework, the fundamental principle that is proposed may itself be challenged in our post-

conciliar age—and that is a serious problem. What is there so terribly wrong with riches and honours that we should not only reject them but must positively seek poverty and desire to be scorned and despised? This is something particularly hard to accept today when we feel called upon to appreciate natural values and all the good that is in the world. One may meet the difficulty by saying that such was the example and teaching of Christ. But apart from the fact that this could be questioned as an absolute statement—namely, that Christ always chose what was hard on nature—the problem still remains why Christ should have chosen this way.

Some answer may be found by going right back to the deep-felt need we all have for a minimum of security and wellbeing. All creatures cling to the gift of existence they have received from God. Man as a rational animal clings to it more deliberately and decidedly. And he thinks that the only way that he can be truly secure and content is by having in his power the resources to obtain this; so he wants the possession and control of material means as well as the position in which he can control the lives of others: he wants riches and honour, he wants to feel self-sufficient.

But the truth of the matter is that there is no self-sufficiency in all creation, there is no security nor contentment except in God; everything else can and does fail. Now this is hard to accept, even to understand fully; we are afraid to let go, and the very thought that we may have to do so makes us cling all the more desperately, makes us want more and more. In this way we close ourselves against God. We may not have done anything really bad, like the rich man in the Gospel, but we have lost God.

This is the terrible paradox uttered by Jesus in all the Gospels: He that wants to save himself will be lost, he who loses himself for Christ will be saved (Mt. 10, 39; 16, 25; Mk. 8, 35; Lk. 9, 24; Jn. 12, 25). Any means should be desirable that could save us from such a tragic end; and the means is just this: to trust ourselves wholly and without reserve into the hands of our Father, after the example of his beloved Son. And the more thoroughly and effectively

we do this, the better. This is the *sacred doctrine* (145) that Christ would have us take to heart and spread through all the world. We are called to be apostles.

The Two Standards can also be seen as a dramatic presentation of an important point made in the Rules for Discernment: the danger of our being led astray by an apparent good—or by a lesser and seemingly more immediate good. Yet another consideration would be that this meditation brings to the surface the tension between nature and person in the human being, which we noted earlier. Our nature by its very composition cannot but seek to acquire, whereas the movement of our person is to let go. What is wrong with our nature? Nothing, except that we are so much more than the *rational animal* that the classical definition makes us be. Our mistake lies in identifying ourselves with our nature and in trying to compensate for the limitations we find there by a false sense of self-sufficiency; this is pride, and from pride we come *to every other vice* (142).

One rather obvious sense in which our self-sufficiency is false is that in our quest of possessions and position we get caught up in a network of dubious social relationships from which we cannot extricate ourselves. On the other hand, it is not only having things, but also not having things that can be used to dominate over and manipulate others. Thus a handicapped person can use a disability to tyrannise over the rest of the family, making them feel guilty, etc. Our nature is wily indeed.

In order to strengthen the resolution not to yield to nature, the retreatant is asked to meditate on the Three Classes of Men. This is the only exercise that seems to be entirely of Ignatius' own devising; it is a way of testing one's attitude in face of a problem. The problem in question is spiritual and the whole context in which it is proposed is highly supernatural, but the exercise as such could be said to be purely psychological—the only one of its kind in the whole retreat.

Faced with an option where the issue is not so much of right and wrong as of the better and the less good, a couple

of men ignore the problem and indefinitely postpone a decision; another couple tries to come to terms with the problem and to arrive at a decision that satisfies both conscience and natural inclination; finally the third meets the problem head-on and is ready for an uncompromising decision, whatever it may eventually be.

It may help to notice that quite often it is not a matter of determining which attitude is ours but of realizing that it is very likely that there is something of all the three in us and that this is almost inevitable. The important question is which attitude is going to dominate and effectively guide our main line of action. Obviously this must be the third attitude. We may recall once again the example of Jesus in his agony. There was in him the very understandable human reaction of not wanting to face the challenge at all; there was the anxious desire to find some other solution; but what triumphed was his uncompromising adherence to his Father's will.

Ignatius proposes some drastic means for securing this adherence (157): if we find ourselves shying away from something difficult or unpleasant, let us positively seek it and ask for it—that will teach our negative attitudes a lesson. Doubtless the progress of psychology in our day could add many subtle touches to the basically sound but rather stark design of Ignatius. For instance, we might ask whether, given a fundamental attitude of the third kind, there is no room for something of the other two approaches with regard to secondary aspects of a particular problem; in other words, whether some things are not best left alone, or whether a problem may not be better solved by not tackling immediately all its elements. Of course, all this must be done in the interests of a truly effective solution such as is envisaged in the third attitude,—but the point we are trying to make is that a solution must be effective not just in the abstract but in the concrete situation in which we find ourselves—and we may not be in a position to do everything all at once. Obviously, we are on slippery ground here, with plenty of room for self-deception, and sound advice is very important.

Love that knows no law

Besides the two meditations just dealt with, Ignatius has a consideration, to be kept in mind and occasionally reflected upon, on what he calls Three Ways of Being Humble, or submissive to God's will. The first two ways—or degrees, as they have been called—are easy to understand and to distinguish: the first is submission in matters involving a grave commandment that binds under mortal sin; the second is submission in all matters where we are aware of the will of God, whether it binds under any kind of sin or not: one simply wants what God wants.

Having said this—namely, that in the second degree one wants whatever God wants—it is not difficult to see that a further degree creates a problem, at least regarding the way it should be presented: it says that, presupposing we have the attitude of the two other ways, if we find that God is equally glorified by either alternative in a given choice, we opt for that which makes us more like Christ. The problem is: if one of the alternatives brings us closer to Christ, how can we say that both are equally to the glory of God?

The answer could well be that precisely when other considerations do not enable us to decide that one choice is more pleasing to God than the other, then we judge that what makes us more like Christ is in fact what God wants us to choose. But the third degree involves more than just a further element that enables us to make up our mind. A new spirit is at work at this level of submission to God.

To explain this, we may say that in the first degree, the will of God is a negative norm: it forms a sort of boundary beyond which I will not go and within which I feel free to do what I like. In the second, the will of God is a positive norm: it determines the details of my life, I do not feel free to do my own thing but let myself be ruled entirely by the divine will. In the third, the will of God is not a norm at all: it is a person, the Person of Christ, who is God's will for me; it is the Spirit of Christ that puts me in tune with the Father in all my being and activity, so that like Christ

I am well pleasing to him. This goes beyond all *do's and don'ts* and penetrates to depths that no rule could plumb.

Whilst all the three degrees are concerned more with attitude than with performance, the third is supremely concerned with a basic christlike attitude. We shall not discuss how far such an attitude would lead us to embrace always the less agreeable of two alternatives, which seems to be what Ignatius implies in the text but is hardly the example of Christ in his mortal life. Rather, we shall draw attention to the parallel between these three degrees and the three stages of conversion that were mentioned earlier: we could indeed say that in the first degree, God is a major concern, in the second he is the dominant concern, whilst in the third he is the sole concern, as he was for Christ. Therefore the *mystical conversion* is not beyond the range of the Exercises, and it does look within our reach when it is seen in terms of a christlikeness that should be the ideal of every Christian.

In saying that it seems to be within our reach we do not imply that it can be attained by our own unaided effort—whatever that means. But we do suggest that it should not require a very extraordinary grace, and that any generous Christian can aspire to it by a ready response to the ever-present action of the Spirit. The Exercises are meant precisely to help such a person to be thus fully alive to God in Christ.

There is room for rules

An important aspect of being thus alive is *recta sapere*—that special sensitiveness that has been mentioned before. This sensitiveness is very much at the heart of the series of Rules that appear at the very end of the Exercises, of which the best known are the first and the last—that is, the Rules for Discernment that have already been referred to, and the so-called Rules for Thinking with the Church which we shall speak of presently. It is very interesting to note how often the word *sentir* figures in the titles of these various rules: *Sentir y conocer* (313), *Sentir y entender* (345). This is unfortunately lost in many translations. Most important of all,

Ignatius speaks of *Sentido* with regard to 'the Church, not of *thinking with*.

In fact these rules for *being in tune with the Church* could be said to be an application to the Church and to things ecclesiastical of the Presupposition which appears at the beginning of the Exercises, for they are very much concerned with a basic acceptance, which does not necessarily mean approval, but lies at a level deeper than any judgement or feeling. What is proposed is a psychological attitude rather than a theological position, though there is a fundamental principle of faith involved—that the Church is the Bride of Christ and lives by his Spirit. The idea throughout is that no matter how negative our feelings and judgements may be, we can and must have a positive attitude to the Church, and concretely, to three groups within it which in all ages seem to be the main source of difficulty: the authorities, with their burden of office and their many limitations, the theologians with their bright theories and mutual rejections, the simple people with their all too popular devotions.

We must learn to live with the concrete human reality of the Church, and to live in a manner that is really growth-producing for ourselves and for others, according to the beautiful ideal proposed by St Paul: *If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head, by whom the whole body is fitted and bound together, every joint adding its own strength, for each separate part to work according to its function. So the whole body grows until it has built itself up, in love* (Eph. 4, 15-16).

Indeed, the Church is the context, the divinely provided environment, for our growth in interior knowledge of the Lord.

This way of regarding the Church leads almost irresistibly to the thought of the Virgin Mary, who has herself been compared to the atmosphere all about us and is called, in more theological terms, the Type of the Church. The great devotion of Ignatius to the blessed Mother is well known, and her unobtrusive but very effective presence can be sensed throughout the Exercises. Today there is a feeling,

and no little grieving, that the cult of Mary is declining. We like to think that she is only less conspicuous; and that this is so precisely because she has entered more deeply into our lives, where perhaps she is taken for granted, whilst she quietly fulfils her role, like the Mother that she is. More than any rule, she can show us what it means to be *aglow with the Spirit, serving the Lord* (Rom. 12:11).

Mary may also be seen as the living embodiment of the guiding principle for growth in christlikeness that is enunciated by Ignatius in the closing lines of the section on decision-making or Election: *Let each one reflect that the measure of progress in the spiritual life is the transcending of self-love, self-will and self-interest* (189).



FIND PEACE IN ME
(Jo. 16: 33)

Two actions of Jesus stand out in the Last Supper—the washing of the feet and the institution of the Eucharist. In both, he wants that his disciples do what he had done. But obviously it is not mere performance that is enjoined; it is a spirit and a whole way of life.

Here, as throughout his mission, Jesus manifests fundamental attitudes and acts out basic principles that must guide us in our response to the challenges we meet, the options that face us—and these are lessons we should ponder in the phase of Election during the retreat.

The following reflections, like all the rest, are presented not as a substitute for but rather as a complement to what is provided in the Exercises.

10—John 13: 4-17; and 1 Cor. 1: 21-25

He got up from the table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it around his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand.' 'Never!' said Peter. 'You shall never wash my feet.' Jesus replied, 'If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.' 'Then, Lord,' said Simon Peter, 'not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!' Jesus said, 'No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you.' He knew who was going to betray him, that was why he said, 'though not all of you.'

When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again he went back to the table. 'Do you understand', he said, 'what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may do as I have done to you. I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the man who sent him. Now that you know this, happiness will be yours if you behave accordingly.'

*

The washing of the feet by Jesus, as described by John, has all the marks of the institution of a sacrament—more so in fact than the gospel narratives relating to any sacrament—yet it has never been regarded as a sacrament in the technical sense of the term. The reason for this seems to be the consciousness that when Jesus commanded that the apostles do as he has done, he did not have in mind a ceremony or rite to be performed but a whole way of life or an integral programme of action, which is summed up in the one word: service.

Service of one's fellowmen must be the central—in a way, the only—christian concern, the one thing that marks out the disciple of Christ and makes Christ's own mission

credible. In a sense, christian service is a sacrament, for it makes the saving reality of Christ present to the world—all the sacraments, even the Eucharist, are geared to this, that we be ready to serve and to give our lives for the redemption of the world, after the example of Christ and in continuance of his mission.

And not just any service will do. Today particularly, when the world at large has to some extent taken to heart the need for mutual concern, no ordinary service will mark us out as having a message, but only that extreme form of service which is christlike; which—as we see from the reactions of Peter—is a total reversal of accepted human standards of behaviour: what precisely this means for each one of us only the Spirit can tell; but it surely goes beyond mere good fellowship and it does involve in some way a reaching out to the rejected and the down-trodden, the exploited and the merely forgotten.

We must indeed recognize and appreciate the values, the much good, to be found in this world. But we must also realize that this good can come in the way of a greater good; and that God may, and sometimes does, want that we give up the lesser so that he can more freely bestow on us that which is so much better and to our own best advantage. God's ways are not men's ways, nor their thoughts his thoughts; if we know this, happiness will be ours if we behave accordingly. For there is a wisdom and a power in God that is not accessible to mere human ingenuity or effort.

*

As God in his wisdom ordained, the world failed to find him by its wisdom, and he chose to save those who have faith by the folly of the message we preach. Jews demand miracles, Greeks look for wisdom; but we proclaim Christ—yes, Christ nailed to the cross; and though this is a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Greeks, yet to those who have heard his call, Jews and Greeks alike, he is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Divine folly is wiser than the wisdom of man, and divine weakness stronger than man's strength.

11—Matthew 26: 26-29; and 2 Cor. 1: 18-22

During supper Jesus took bread, and having said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples saying: 'Take this and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and having offered thanks to God he gave it to them saying: 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, never again shall I drink from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.'

*

If it is not possible to penetrate fully any aspect of the mystery of Christ, when we come to the Eucharist it is hardly possible even to begin: for herein is the whole mystery of Christ presented as satisfying a basic human need, as food and drink. One might even say that Jesus himself falls short of giving us a clue to this fantastic reality, for in his intimate self-revelation at the Last Supper he speaks of a love than which is no greater, that a man should lay down his life for those whom he loves; but here we find a love that is in fact greater still, that goes beyond death, that goes on giving, that is inexhaustibly poured out.

One of the many things that strike us about the Eucharist is its staggering simplicity. Christian piety has tried to build around it a more or less complex ritual that might somehow explicate its tremendous significance, but it is in fact just a meal shared among friends—that is, not the mere consumption of food among people who get on well together, but a meaningful action performed within a group that is gripped by a loyalty and a commitment that binds it together in an incomparable oneness.

Any meal shared among men marks the triumph of personal regard for others over the selfcentered cravings of nature: all animals eat; only human beings can share a meal. Christ takes this symbol of our ability to be concerned for one another and transforms it into the effective token of a supreme concern, a perfect love, a total giving. When we are gathered in his name he wants us to share the simplest of meals and to call to mind that there was a man who

walked this earth who was totally a Man for Others, whose life was perfect self-gift, whose love was stronger than death, so that he is still with us in his sacrifice, renewing it in each one of us and enabling us to be ourselves gradually transformed into an exhaustible pouring out for the redemption of the world.

Our nature may well recoil at the prospect of such an emptying of ourselves. Nature is being but true to itself when it shrinks from anything that is perceived as disagreeable, that involves a sacrifice. Or, since we are endowed with reason, our nature may seek a way out of a difficulty, a compromise of some sort. But our true self, the person that we really are, is more generously disposed; and if only we can shake off the fears and other negative influences to which nature may be subject, we can respond positively and with true effectiveness to every challenge that confronts us.

That is not easy, but it is possible. And we have a divine assurance that we can live up to all that God expects from us: the Spirit that has been planted in our inmost being, who dwells in the depths of us, enabling us to be, like Christ and in Christ, a total Yes to the Father.

*

As God is true, the language in which we address you is not an ambiguous blend of Yes and No. The Son of God, Christ Jesus, proclaimed among you by us (I mean by Silvanus and Timothy and myself), was never a blend of Yes and No. With him it was, and is, Yes. He is the Yes pronounced upon God's promises, every one of them. That is why, when we give glory to God, it is through Christ Jesus that we say 'Amen'. And if you and we belong to Christ, guaranteed as his and anointed, it is all God's doing; it is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts.

12—John 16: 31-33; and Phil. 2: 5-8

Jesus answered, 'Do you now believe? Look, the hour is coming, has indeed already come, when you are all to be scattered, each to his home, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have told you all this so that in me you may find peace. In the world you will have trouble. But courage! I have conquered the world.'

*

Jesus makes one last attempt to explain to the apostles what is about to happen; in fact, he tells them, the time has already come; terrible prophecies are being fulfilled. But his message is peace and confidence; and the last words of his long discourse: be brave, I have conquered the world.

What happened to Jesus—or rather, what went on in his mind and heart—when he came to his supreme hour, to what he called simply his hour, is nowhere better seen than in his agony in the garden: there we can look into the inner workings of what even in its outward manifestation is overwhelming but is not quite understood; there we touch, not only the awesome mystery of the death of God, but the mystery also of the whole of God's life on earth.

In our firm conviction that Christ is God, we tend to make him a superman. But God as he is, Christ is not a superman; he is just human—like us in all things but sin. He suffered not only physical pain but deep interior anguish; and the distress that became so acute in the garden was never wholly absent in all his mortal life. If he was fearless, it was not that he knew no fear but that he could rise above it with an effort. He was never alone, yet he could feel lonely and in need of support. He is not a superman.

Yes, he is without sin; his life is wholly open to God. But even in this he has borne our burden. In some mysterious way—and in the powerful language of St Paul—he who was without sin was made sin for us by God himself. Here we touch the ultimate agony. In the ocean of sorrow that overwhelmed him, the pain beyond endurance was this quasi-identification with sin. We cannot grasp what it meant, because we have made friends with sin.

For one who understood sin as Jesus did, this proximity was utterly unbearable; for one to whom the will of the Father was existence itself, this close association with a denial of that will was an impossible nightmare, disturbing, unmanning; it was also in a mysterious way confusing, for it was the Father's will itself that demanded this. The physical suffering of Jesus may have been equalled or surpassed by others; this agony no one could possibly experience and it is not surprising that it produced unusual effects. Jesus becomes like a helpless child crying in the dark: Abba!

But with that cry he makes a break-through, cutting across all the pressures that lay so heavily upon him; not shaking off his burden but finding peace and the strength to bear it bravely.

He has given us an example. But more than that, he has given us his Spirit, the Spirit of filial adoption that reaches out to God with the cry: Abba! In spite of all our human limitations, and of the oppressive circumstances in which we may have to operate, we can find the truth that makes us free, not so much by a calculated quest of God's will as by a christlikeness that puts us in tune with the Father.

*

In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus: His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.

6. REALIZATION

In our post-conciliar age, the unity and centrality of the Paschal Mystery are universally recognized—that is, we understand and accept the intrinsic relationship between the death and resurrection of Christ as the one process of his passing from this world to the Father, and we realize that the christian life is fundamentally our entering into this process, so that we participate in Christ's death and resurrection not only at the end of our life or at the end of time, but here and now. Our ideal is to be ever more *dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 6:11).

In this perspective it is not easy to explain the seemingly accessory character of the Third and Fourth Weeks, not to speak of the very division into two weeks. The real work of the retreat seems to be finished with the Election or the reform of life, and from the beginning of the Exercises the suffering Christ has been present, with some reference to his triumph. So what does the rest add, apart from a rounding-off of the Gospel narrative?

The question used to be posed differently in earlier days, when the *three faculties* approach prevailed: Why is it that the powerful motivation of the Passion is not brought to bear on the decision that is the main purpose of the retreat? The answer then was that decisions must be taken in the light of reason enlightened by faith, and not under the stress of emotions. The sufferings of Christ must indeed come under consideration, but somewhat in the abstract, as a guiding principle. Later, when we have sanely and sagely made up our minds and taken our resolutions, we can dwell on the concrete details of what Christ went through and use the emotions to reinforce what reason has dictated.

This explanation does not satisfy today. We must look elsewhere for the significance, and the great importance, of the Third and Fourth Weeks. We shall approach them in this section, using, as always, *interior knowledge* as a key for interpretation. And we shall conclude with some considerations on the Contemplation to attain Love.

WITHIN THE HOLY TRINITY

The Election may be regarded as the peak-point of the Exercises. But it is not journey's end. We cannot stay on a peak; but having attained to it must come down to the hard realities of the plain. Having made a decision we must put it into effect: this is of capital importance.

Of course, the execution of our resolutions will almost surely come after the retreat. But there is another kind of realization—of making real—that is at the level not of action but of attitude: this is very important too, and it is part of the process. We must enter—the whole of us, with our decision—into the heart of the Trinity, which is our true home. We must let our life be entirely permeated with the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This means a more intimate participation in the Paschal Mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ. Obviously, this is not done at any one given moment; it must happen all the time. But in so far as a particular phase of the retreat must give particular attention to it, this is the aim of the Third and Fourth Weeks.

And for this reason, this phase is also inevitably characterized by a new kind of activity—or by a shift in accent, where the stress is rather on a certain passivity. This entering into the depths of the Paschal Mystery is not so much something we do as something done to us. To the extent that we are in tune with the mind and heart of Christ, according to the ideal of the third degree of humility, we are carried by his Spirit through the process of passing from the world to the Father, of being more fully alive to God.

A reference to what has been said earlier about personal relationship, personal communication and the deeper level at which communion and intimacy are realized, may help to understand the movement of grace at this point in the Exercises: intimacy is fostered and sustained by many exchanges and much sharing at the more obvious level of

giving and receiving; but when it is deep and strong, intimacy becomes its own resource, it thrives on itself, it grows on itself, it grows by the very fact of being intimate. The same is verified also in our spiritual life, in our relationship with God, which progressively requires less of the more obvious kind of activity and becomes increasingly a matter of being animated by the Spirit.

Lack of attention to this particular aspect of passivity at this phase in the retreat could lead to a frustrating experience at this stage, which should be the most fulfilling. If we try to rouse ourselves to intense feelings of sorrow or of joy we may fail, especially if we have already put in a sustained effort in the previous days; we may do better if we just allow ourselves to be penetrated by the sufferings, death and resurrection of the Lord, so that his own total and perfect surrender gently but effectively takes hold of all our good intentions, of the positive attitudes we have developed, of the whole of ourselves.

By the Cross and Resurrection

The fundamental meaning of the Cross is to be found in surrender—not so much in pain and humiliation, though we cannot ignore these aspects of the Passion, as in Christ putting himself into the hands of his Father, and into the hands of men in submission to his Father's will. That this must be regarded as dominant in the mind of Christ may be seen from the account of his prophecy of Peter's eventual crucifixion, where the reference is not to suffering but to surrender: *You will stretch out your hands, and someone else will put a belt round you, and take you...* (Jo 21:18). When Jesus invites his disciples to take up their cross, he invites them above all to surrender.

This is not to say that there is no pain involved. It costs us to open up, because we are so prone to curl in on ourselves. But there is deep satisfaction too in yielding; and to yield to God is triumph.

Indeed the fundamental meaning of the Resurrection is also surrender: the glory of Christ is not just a reward he receives for his sacrifice; rather, the sacrifice itself is his

glory—the fact that as man he is now wholly in the possession of God and that he enables us all to be likewise possessed by God. There is no greater achievement nor greater joy than to belong to God and thus to enter into the fullness of the freedom that he bestows on those who are his own.

In this perspective, christian death takes on a richer and more positive meaning. It is not just a painful preliminary for reaping the fruits of our submission to God in this life. It is the culminating point of our life, when free from the pressures and obstacles, the limitations that have crippled our performance, we can affirm our true selves and in union with Christ can freely and fully put ourselves into the hands of the Father. All the frustrated efforts of the past, all our ineffectual good intentions, will have their impact on that final surrender. It is a moment to be looked forward to with eager longing.

This being said, it remains true that our sharing in the death and resurrection of the Lord must be here and now, in this present life that is graced by union with Christ in his Paschal Mystery. We must be living witnesses to the triumph of Christ who has conquered not only death but every human limitation. We shall not shake off these limitations whilst we are in this world, but we shall bear them with a new inner freedom, for *overwhelming victory is ours because of him who loved us . . . nor can any created thing ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8, 37-39).

This freedom is the *indifference* of the Principle and Foundation, now seen in the light of Christ: that is, in the light of his total surrender to the Father in recognition of the holiness—which is the absolute reality—of God; and of the total dominion he thus obtains as Lord over all creation. Moreover our union with Christ in the Paschal Mystery is not just ideal but real—that is, Christ is really present in us and in all creation, not just as God but precisely as the Risen Lord. Catholic concern over the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist has led to a playing down, and almost an implicit denial, of his real presence beyond the sacramental sign, regarding which we have his own repeated assurances.

The real presence of the risen Christ in the whole of creation seems to be St Paul's understanding of the Ascension, since he says that Christ *rose higher than all the heavens to fill all things* (Eph. 4, 10). And the Church, in affirming that a sacrament contains the reality it signifies, has never maintained that the reality is exhaustively and exclusively contained in the sign. This would in fact be absurd. The earlier reflections on presence as related to awareness may help here. The eucharistic signs certainly intensify our awareness, they make Christ more present, but what they signify is precisely that he is with us always and everywhere—that is the big thrill of our lives.

Signs of the Mystery beyond

This fits in with what is said of all the sacraments today: that they are like affectionate gestures that at particular moments make more obviously and effectively present in our lives the love of someone who cares always. If I am warmly hugged or tenderly kissed, I have a more intense and meaningful experience of a reality that is permanently there, but to which I can now respond more totally, and by responding make it grow. It would be scant comfort if I thought that I was loved only when I was hugged. The joy and the strength, the life-giving power of a deep and abiding personal relationship, come from the conviction that whilst I am only sometimes hugged, I am always loved and ever more so.

Applying this to all the sacraments: we should conceive of grace not so much as something that is produced by the performance of a ritual, but as Someone, God himself, who is always present, enveloping us in his love: *in him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17: 28). To be open to God is to be in the state of grace. And all that happens around us, and we ourselves, should be seen as manifestations of God's love and invitations to respond to that love. So our whole life is sacramental, filled with signs of God's caring. But he reaches out in more special gestures too, that are easier to recognize, and above all in his Son and in the Church, which is the body of Christ and the more obvious context in which we live and move and have our being.

The Church herself is to be regarded as the universal sacrament. But there are also the particular sacraments, traditionally identified as such, which intensify our awareness of special aspects of God's grace and of the saving work of Christ. Baptism opens the way to the rest: it is a gesture that makes more present, more real and effective, the ocean of love in which our existence is already located. In the sacramental waters, *God's love has flooded our inmost heart through the Holy Spirit he has given us* (Rom. 5:5), and now our *life is hidden with Christ in God*; each sacrament is a special encounter with Christ, *who is our life* (Col. 3:3-4).

But the sacraments, wonderful though they be, are not God's ultimate gift to his children. They are signs; they point to something beyond. They contain the reality they signify, but they invite us and aid us to go forward, to the reality pure and simple. We are called to the bliss of heaven, where there are no signs or symbols but only the stark Reality, and this is what is meant by saying that in heaven we shall see God face to face. Already in this life we are plunged into the heart of the Blessed Trinity, but at present we are only dimly aware of this by the signs of God's love that surround us. *The knowledge that I have now is imperfect; but then I shall know as fully as I am known* (I Cor. 13:12).

The question is sometimes raised, why there is no sacrament for the religious life as there is for marriage and for the priesthood. The answer is that the religious life is an anticipation of the life of heaven, where there are no sacraments but only the reality of God. This is what is meant by the cumbersome phrase that speaks of the eschatological dimension of the religious life. It does not say that a religious man or woman is more holy than any simple Christian; but it does say that he or she represents a more advanced stage in the Christian's way to God. An analogy may help to clarify this: Christ in the Eucharist is not less holy or divine than he is at the right hand of the Father; but he is in what may be regarded as a humbler state under the sacramental species of bread and wine than he is in the glory of heaven.

Conjugal love is a most precious reality of human life; but besides being a reality it is also a symbol and sacrament

of a greater reality: the union between Christ and his Church, the love of God for his creation. The vow of chastity is not so much a renunciation of conjugal love as a going beyond it to the Love it represents. It leads to a more immediate contact with God, like that of heaven, stark but infinitely rich and enriching. It brings interior knowledge to a farther depth of intimacy, impossible to spell out in words but very real. This intimacy, by a new faith-experience of God as Absolute, inspires to a more profound humility and carries forward the process of liberation. Freedom is further confirmed by the observance of poverty, by the readiness to share, to give away and to do without. A free person, it has been said, is one that has nothing to lose. Such a person is also one that has so much to bestow on others, and gains in the bestowing. Free persons can form a meaningful community, in the bonds of loyalty and obedience. The religious family must be a working model of heaven, planted like an oasis in the desert, where the weary pilgrim trudging to the Father's home can have the refreshing and heartening experience of that perfect communion when *God will be all and in all* (I Cor. 15: 28), holding all together in his love.

Growing to our full stature

The call to holiness, we know, is universal; and the Spirit is at work everywhere, slowly but surely transforming our hearts, *until we attain to human perfection, wholly mature with the fullness of Christ himself* (Eph. 4,13). What does it mean, to be perfectly human? One hears so much about maturity nowadays and there is such a frantic quest for personal growth. All manner of questions are asked about spiritual maturity and its relationship to ordinary human maturity, and the relationship of this latter to ordinary human experience as it is found in the context of the family and society at large.

Maturity is an elusive thing; like life, with which it is intimately connected, it can be experienced and described but not defined. It can in some way be measured in terms of the capacity of a living being to cope with its environ-

ment. The minimal coping is just survival; though only a beginning, this is already a great achievement and an absolute condition for growth. A further stage comes with the ability to utilize the environment to one's own advantage; something of this is present from the start, but increasing exercise in harnessing the resources of nature is both a mark and a means of growth. The decisive stage, to which maturity most truly belongs, is the capacity to contribute to the environment, to create, to procreate. Ultimately, maturity is not something that is acquired as a possession; rather, it is attained in the very process of giving, of dispossessing oneself, and particularly of communicating life.

At this point some distinctions are in order, in line with the distinction already made between nature and person, and in the way they operate. Only a person can purely give, but we are not purely persons, we are persons with a human nature. This nature is both a means for self-giving and a limit to the gift of self. The family, with the various relationships that bind the members together, is a school of generosity and provides the normal context for human growth and maturity; but it has its limitations too. There is need to transcend the family. This does not necessarily mean the renouncement of family life, nor does such a renouncement necessarily bring with it a greater capacity for self-gift. But it can greatly help. In any case, human maturity is inseparably linked with selflessness.

A further point to note is that for nature, maturity attains a peak point beyond which there is not only no further growth but the beginning of decline. Strictly speaking, a person as such is not subject to the law of decline; and as one grows older a proper balance must be kept between the graceful acceptance of our decreasing ability to cope with environment, and an abiding freshness in our personal attitudes to life, to people, to God. In our spiritual life certainly, which is simply our personal relationship to God in Christ, there is no peak point; we are called to be perfectly generous as our heavenly Father is. It is important to keep in mind that we cannot, we must not, grow old in the spiritual life.

It may not be easy to maintain a youthful zest when our forces begin to fail, but we must take to heart the very fundamental fact that the ever greater giving of spiritual maturity is really a surrender—it is not so much doing something as letting God do to us, letting him take more and more possession of us, till we are most truly ourselves and most fully human by belonging wholly to him.

The paradox of the Absolute

The realization—that is, the making real in our lives—of the holiness or absoluteness of God is the ultimate horizon of our personal sanctity. It is the crown of the process of conversion and will be perfectly attained to only in heaven. But already in this life we must come to the realization of a further divine truth. At the heart of the holiness of God there is the mystery that is the secret of the transformation of our lives, that revolutionizes our whole vision of reality and of our own existence. This is very simply stated by St John in saying: God is Love. This statement, made up of three basic words in any vocabulary, enshrines the most startling paradox that has ever been uttered—the paradox that is at the heart of every other paradox, of every contradiction, polarization, conflict, as well as of every reconciliation, collaboration and fruitfulness.

For what is said in effect is that the Absolute, that is the totally unrelated Being of God, is the perfection of relationship, which is love. That—if we may speak so lightly of this profoundest of mysteries—is the meaning of the Trinity. All philosophy that is real philosophy comes finally to the concept of an Ultimate Reality that is perfectly simple, unqualified, one. Christian revelation is in agreement; but Christ, who has made known to us the inner life of God, goes further: the Ultimate Reality is relationship, the Ultimate Reality is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, perfectly one but distinct by relationship.

This completely changes our idea of what reality is, not only ultimately but at every turn; hence what our life must be, and wherein lies perfection: not in isolation and self-sufficiency, but in harmony and mutual self-giving. All that

comes from God, all that is real, is one-in-relationship. If we descend to the lowest level of existence, brute matter, we find that bodies have a mysterious mutual attraction that relates them one to the other: nobody knows what or why gravity is, but it is a fact. And as we ascend the scale of being we find new principles of relationship coming into play, not replacing but transforming the lower ones, giving life in all its rich variety: plants have their tropism and animals their instincts. At the level of person the supreme law of relationship is love, which is free, which can transcend the self to find it more perfectly in another, after the pattern of God's own life and activity.

And so it is that the whole of creation cries out that God is Love, everywhere we see Love at work bringing fruitfulness to relationship. And as we become sensitive to this presence and this action, the whole world becomes transparent to us, revealing the face of God; then we see things as Jesus saw them. And as we progress in sensitivity, as we let ourselves be more and more caught up in the delicate network of relationships, we ourselves become transparent to God's love; others see God's love in us.

Then truly and manifestly is Jesus's last prayer fulfilled, that the love with which the Father loves him, which is the Holy Spirit, be also in us. This is the Pentecostal event realized in our lives; we find our place, our effectiveness, in God's plan, which is to gather all things together in Christ, in perfect relationship. This is also the culmination of the Exercises as it appears in the Contemplation for attaining Love; and it is the ultimate in interior knowledge: *Here I must ask for interior knowledge of the many blessings I have received so that out of the fulness of my gratitude I can wholly love and serve his Divine Majesty* (233).

What is interior knowledge of the many blessings I have received? We can have some understanding of this by reflecting on our attitude to the gifts that may come to us from various sources. If I get a present from a stranger, I am surprised, suspicious, and possibly disturbed: what is someone up to? If the present is from an acquaintance, I appreciate it for what it is worth, and by its value I assess

the giver and the intention in giving. But if it is an intimate friend that makes the present, then it is the other way round: I prize the gift because of the one who gives, its value comes from the love that brings it to me; I respond to the love, and the gift is but a privileged occasion for an intenser response.

Everything in my life, and life itself, comes from God. If God is a stranger to me, then I will be confused and troubled by much that I get from him. If God is but a nodding acquaintance, I shall measure his caring by what is agreeable to me. If I am intimate with God, I shall appreciate and embrace everything that happens, as a token of God's love. All my experience will be ultimately an experience of God; all my response to reality will be positive, because I am responding to God's infinite love. This is being alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Such is the ideal of the christian life: here is the end of the retreat and the beginning of an existence transformed into the image of Christ, finding God in all things, loving all things in God, always available for service, with but one prayer in the heart: *Take Lord, and receive—all...* (234)

TAKE O LORD

as your rightful claim

AND RECEIVE

as my own free gift

ALL MY LIBERTY

myself as a self-determining person

MY MEMORY MY UNDERSTANDING

AND MY WHOLE WILL

the endowments of my spiritual nature

ALL I HAVE

in qualities of body

AND ALL I POSSESS

of the goods of this world

IT IS ALL YOURS LORD

who are the source of all reality

YOU GAVE IT TO ME

without it ceasing to be yours

I MAKE IT OVER TO YOU

that it may be more truly mine

DISPOSE OF IT ENTIRELY

ACCORDING TO YOUR WILL

which is now my own will and ardent desire

GIVE ME YOUR LOVE

that is your very self

AND YOUR GRACE

your Spirit dwelling in me

AND I WANT NO MORE

for the perfect joy

is to belong wholly to you

in Christ Jesus

MAY ALL BE ONE
(Jo. 17:21)

Christian tradition recognizes and cherishes one and the same upper room as the privileged scene of the institution of the Eucharist in which Christ anticipates his redemptive death, of his manifestation to his disciples after his rising from the dead, and of the coming of the Spirit on the Virgin Mary and the infant Church. This room then, usually called the Cenacle, is very much associated with the Paschal Mystery.

But today the whole world becomes sacramentally the scene of the events first experienced in the Cenacle. For in the Paschal Mystery Jesus transcends the bounds of time and space and can reach out to each one of us to transform all into a new creation with a new and unbounded capacity for life and for love—this is the ideal and the reality presented in the Third and Fourth Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises.

The reflections that follow, like all those that have preceded, are especially connected with the Last Supper and the Cenacle.

13—John 17: 1-5, 24-26; and Gal. 2: 18-21

Jesus looked up to heaven and said: 'Father, the hour has come: glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you; and, through the power over all mankind that you have given him, let him give eternal life to all those you have entrusted to him. And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do. Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before ever the world was.'

'Father, I want that those you have given me be with me where I am, so that they may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Righteous One, the world has not known you, but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I may be in them.'

*

All through his mortal life Jesus looked forward to what he called his hour, the hour of his glory, the hour when he would consummate his total self-gift, his love for his Father and his love for us, by surrendering himself wholly into the hands of the Father for the salvation of mankind. He had always belonged entirely to God, and in word and deed he had manifested that he came from God, but now as man and on behalf of all he would place himself in the perfect possession of God. That was his triumph and his glory, the accomplishment of his task.

A vast variety of factors conspired in the death of Christ, but he made it clear that he laid down his life of his own free will: he chose to die, he chose the manner of his death. There is one thing about crucifixion that distinguishes it from other commonly known forms of execution, namely, that no one can inflict it on himself; someone else must do it, and it would seem that Jesus had this in mind when he foretold to Peter the way the latter would end his life: when he was old, Jesus said, someone else would have the mastery over him.

Crucifixion is essentially surrender, and though Jesus freely died, he chose to surrender: when he calls on all his

disciples to take up their cross and follow him, what is chiefly intended is not physical suffering but a surrender of self, like the grain of wheat falling on the ground.

Jesus also prophesied that when he was lifted up he would draw all to himself, and indeed we find every type and condition of humanity gathered on or around Calvary on that historic Pasch. There was innocence and sin; repentance and obduracy; staunch faithfulness and vacillation; courage and cowardice; sensitivity and callousness; all manner of passions, and a dispassionate carrying out of a routine job; a great involvement and total indifference.

All this and much more was there. And all through subsequent ages, every member of the human race has fitted into one or other character. No one can simply ignore the great drama that is at the centre of history, for as the light of Christ shines on everyone, so does the shadow of his cross fall on each. But we do have a choice, albeit within limits, with regard to the particular role we play.

In many ways we are the creatures of circumstances, our lives are shaped by factors beyond our control; but in a very true sense we can choose to lay down our lives, to lose ourselves as Jesus did. And in losing ourselves we gain the fullness of life: this is the paradox of God's wisdom and power that manifests itself in folly and weakness, to confound the pride of man. In humility we can learn this supreme lesson, and so much else, from Jesus. We can have that interior knowledge which unites him to the Father, and which he shares with us, so that their mutual love, that is the Holy Spirit, may dwell in our hearts.

*

Now I can live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and who sacrificed himself for my sake. I cannot bring myself to give up God's gift: if the Law can justify us, there is no point in the death of Christ.

14—John 20: 19-23; and Rom. 8: 28-32

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.' After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'

*

There is a delightful confusion in the various accounts of the manifestation of Christ to his disciples after he rose from the dead. It is quite impossible to pull the whole thing together into one coherent story. But the blurred composite picture does not detract from, but rather enhances, the clarity with which three things stand out—three firm convictions that have remained with the Church all through the centuries; indeed, convictions which make the Church.

The first and foremost of these is that Christ has truly risen, that he has conquered death and every human disability: this is the central fact of the Resurrection. Allied to it are two other convictions that are explicitated in the narratives of the Ascension and of Pentecost: that Christ has entrusted his disciples with a mission as vast as the world, and that he is with them in the fulfilment of this mission, which is nothing less than to proclaim, and to bring all mankind to accept, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father; that in him we are saved.

The glory, the joy of the risen Christ is not a reward that comes to him from without; it is not something added on by the Father, so to speak, as a recognition for the act of surrender by which Jesus emptied himself and became obedient even to the death of the cross: it is the outcome of the surrender itself; indeed it is the surrender itself, for the perfect joy and the ultimate glory is just to belong wholly to God. All God's blessings are just this: not so much something that he gives to us, but his letting us give ourselves to him.

Since Christ has already made a surrender on our behalf, God can claim us for his own; and to establish his claim he places the seal of the Spirit in the depths of our being. The Spirit is the gift of the risen Christ to us: but this gift too—indeed, this gift supremely—is a capacity to give ourselves to the Father in filial obedience. The Spirit is at work in us, perfecting the image of the Son, conforming us to Christ.

The risen Lord is not remote from those who are his own, ruling their lives from some lofty eminence; rather it is in the Resurrection that the prayer of Jesus is fulfilled, that they might be one in him as he is one with the Father, as a token of his love. St Paul suggests that the meaning of the Ascension is not that Jesus has gone up above and beyond our reach, but that he now fills all creation with his presence, not just as God but as the risen Lord, invisibly but effectively present in the measure in which we are sensitive to him.

To be caught up in Christ is to be fully free, to be master of one's destiny, not by an escape from this world, for Christ does not want us to be taken out of this world, but through a strange paradox, which is the folly of the cross, by the acceptance of all the pain of this world, which the pain of Christ has transformed into triumph.

Our human experience may still be one of weakness, of failure to live up to the ideal we have embraced, but there is a hidden force at work in us, the Spirit of Christ, keeping us alive to God, harnessing all our resources to the greater glory of God.

*

We know that by turning everything to their good God co-operates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose especially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son, so that his Son might be the eldest of many brothers. He called those he intended for this; those he called he justified, and with those he justified he shared his glory. After saying this, what can we add? With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything he can give.

15—Luke 24: 13-35; and I Thess. 5: 16-25

That same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which lay about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all these happenings. As they talked and discussed with one another, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but something held their eyes from seeing who he was. He asked them, 'What is it you are debating as you walk?' They halted, their faces full of gloom, and one, called Cleopas, answered, 'Are you the only person staying in Jerusalem not to know what has happened there in the last few days?' 'What?' he asked. 'All this about Jesus of Nazareth,' they replied, 'a prophet powerful in speech and action before God and the whole people; how our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and crucified him. But we had been hoping that he was the man to liberate Israel. What is more, this is the third day since it happened, and now some women of our company have astounded us: they went early to the tomb, but failed to find his body, and returned with a story that they had seen a vision of angels who told them he was alive. So some of our people went to the tomb and found things just as the women had said; but him they did not see.'

'How dull you are!' he answered. 'How slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was the Messiah not bound to suffer thus before entering upon his glory?' Then he began with Moses and all the prophets, and explained to them the passages which referred to himself in every part of the scriptures.

By this time they had reached the village to which they were going, and he made as if to continue his journey, but they pressed him: 'Stay with us, for evening draws on, and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. And when he had sat down with them at table, he took bread and said the blessing; he broke the bread, and offered it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to one another, 'Did we not feel our hearts on fire as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

Without a moment's delay they set out and returned to Jerusalem. There they found that the Eleven and the rest of the company had assembled, and were saying 'It is true: the Lord has risen; he has appeared to Simon.' Then they gave their account of the events of their journey and told how he had been recognized by them at the breaking of the bread.

As on his way to Jerusalem for the decisive Pasch Jesus tried to enlighten his disciples about what was to come, so now after the great events he is on the road away from Jerusalem, once again endeavouring to give sight to the blind. This time it is two nondescript disciples who have the unearned privilege of being in close contact with the hero on the very day of his triumph, the greatest in all human history: but they get nothing out of it because they have no faith; they cannot recognise Jesus nor see the significance of the experiences they have been through; and as often happens, everything looks dismal and unpromising; even the hour looks late and dark, though subsequent events show that the day was not so far spent.

But no one can convince them of the contrary, nobody understands their problem. Not that they have any complaints; they harbour no resentments; it had been good while it lasted, it had been wonderful to know Jesus. Indeed they had hoped. But they hoped no more; the evidence was too clearly against that and they must be sensible; they must leave the upper room and quietly make their way home and return to their former selves. And all this because things had not gone the way they had expected.

Jesus tries to show that things had indeed gone the way they were expected to go, the way they had actually been planned to go, that the Christ should suffer and so enter his glory. Something stirs within them, but they are too lost in their disappointment and their self-pity to notice. Much later they wake up to the fact that their hearts have been on fire all the time; much later, when in the breaking of bread they find faith in the risen Lord; then he disappears, but he is more present to them, more active in them now than when they could see him. And in the light of this new, more real though less sensible presence, all things become bright.

It is faith in Christ that gives meaning, value, effectiveness to human life and all its vicissitudes; it gives vision, strength, enthusiasm, joy. We can see things as Christ sees them; we become aware of God at work in and around us; we realize that the Spirit is in us, moving us to a generous response by the fire of love that he kindles in us.

We can rise and go all the way to our ideals and to the commitments we once made. We realise that what matters is not that our plans succeed; in fact what matters is not success at all, in the ordinary sense of the word. We realise that we cannot leave the company of the disciples, we cannot escape from Christ; we can only forget, to our cost, that he is with us.

The two disciples left the Cenacle in their despondency—only to make the discovery of another cenacle at journey's end, with the same Jesus and the same familiar gesture of sharing. Indeed the whole wide world is now the Cenacle, in virtue of the Paschal Mystery: everywhere the Eucharist is celebrated, from the rising of the sun to its setting; everywhere the Spirit is at work, for he fills the universe with his enlivening presence; everywhere the Risen Christ is himself present, opening to us the treasures of his heart. Everywhere we are enveloped in the love of the Father.

The purpose of the retreat is to help us be aware of the marvellous reality in which our life is situated, and to respond to it in perfect freedom; to grow in interior knowledge and to surrender ourselves to God in a joyful oblation of our whole being: Take O Lord, and receive, all . . .

In one of his farewell messages, St Paul sums up beautifully all that the ignatian Exercises are meant to be. For the Apostle speaks of a total belonging to God in Christ, by letting the Holy Spirit assert the divine claims on us, beginning at the deepest level—here called spirit, as distinct from soul and body. He urges openness to God's constant invitation, no matter how his voice reaches us; and a positive response in every circumstance, after the example of Christ. He counsels a persevering practice of discernment, with confidence in the unfailing help of grace.

With these words of St Paul, then, we close this series of reflections, asking as he does: Pray also for us.

Be happy always ; pray at all times ; be thankful in every situation. This is what God wills for you, in Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the Spirit ; do not despise inspired messages. Put all things to the test ; hold on to what is good and avoid any kind of evil. May the God of peace make you completely his, and keep your whole being—spirit, soul and body—free from all fault, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you will do it, for he is faithful! Pray also for us.

7. CONCLUSION

It is a fact that the Spiritual Exercises are increasingly popular today—more popular than they were a generation ago, and more popular than some other aids to christian life that are at present available. One may simply accept this fact and draw what advantage one can from it; or one may try to understand it in depth so as to profit all the more.

The explanation proposed at the beginning of this book is that when we look at the Exercises in the light of Ignatius' own experience, as we do now, they are seen to be very much in line with current theological thinking and the findings of modern psychology, so that they are eminently suited to meet the felt needs of committed Christians in this age of renewal.

It may be thought that in saying this we are merely conforming to the fashion of the day, according to which nothing can be sold on the spiritual market unless it is shown to be post-conciliar and growth-producing. There is indeed a temptation against which we must be on our guard, to modernize Ignatius by dressing him up in the latest style. But this danger should not frighten us away from a mature appreciation of the true sense in which the Exercises are relevant to us.

The clue to this appreciation is found, we believe, in what we would make bold to call *ignatian personalism*—that is, a spirituality based on person rather than on nature, on an understanding of human beings as persons and not just as rational animals. This has been explained in the foregoing pages. What we would add now is that it has a particular significance in the cultural situation in which we find ourselves—a situation of rapid change, in which many of the traditional ways of living and expressing our faith, or even of being human, are felt to be inadequate and unsatisfying. In such circumstances, the cry in the world at large and in the Church is for a return to the sources and to basic reality, so as to move from there to a thorough renewal. And more and more it is realized that the basic human reality is the person which each one of us ultimately and uniquely is.

The points that are briefly touched upon in the above paragraph could, and even should, be further elaborated. But that would be beyond the scope of this book. We shall merely conclude with three essays that present some reflections on the personality of Ignatius and can help to a further understanding of the meaning and function of *interior knowledge*.

A TRIPTYCH OF IGNATIUS

A triptych is a picture in three sections or panels, each of which helps to understand the other two, so that all together they project a sort of multi-dimensional image of the subject.

In our case, the sections are three essays, and the subject is Ignatius of Loyola. We are therefore no longer concerned directly with the Spiritual Exercises but with their author, and with presenting different facets of his personality, so as to complement what was said in the Introduction about his religious experience. Once again, material is drawn largely from the Autobiography, and the numbers in brackets refer to it, unless otherwise indicated.

These studies are centred on certain themes; but their titles also point to a historical sequence:

The Knight Errant
Pilgrim and Servant
Contemplative in Action

We have called this a triptych, though the panels that make it up were not all produced at the same time; they originally served distinct purposes and hence differ somewhat in style. But they are held together in the frame of one picture by the love and loyalty of a member of the Society of Jesus for its Founder.

A tribute of love and loyalty, in the form of reflections on the charism of the founder, seems particularly appropriate on the occasion of the Ignatian Jubilee, which is being celebrated from 27th September 1990 to 31st July 1991.

The knight errant

The popular image of Ignatius of Loyola, cherished by friend and foe alike, is that of a military strategist who in an hour of mortal crisis came to the rescue of the Roman Church and with skillful manoeuvring enabled her not only to survive but to gain strength, to recover lost ground and to expand into hitherto unexplored territory.

Today, those who are interested in his character and achievement are much more concerned about his spiritual doctrine. All the same, one cannot get away from the fact that he was a soldier—for that is how he regarded himself, even after his conversion: *this new soldier of Christ* (21). However, it would give us a much better idea of his personality and of the vision that animated it, if we thought of him as belonging not to an army in the modern sense of the term but to the great chivalric tradition that reached its zenith at the height of the Middle Ages.

Ignatius entered history when the modern age was well on its way, and a considerable part of what he accomplished was precisely to have appreciated and assimilated the values of this age, so as to make them serve the cause of Christ. But in many ways he was medieval, and if day-dreams are any indication of our fundamental psychological make-up, then he was at heart a knight errant. Even after he turned his back resolutely on the past and faced an entirely new future, he tells us that his concrete plans were inspired by the romances of which his head was still full: *Amadis de Gaul and such books* (17). This is confirmed by his vigil of arms at Montserrat.

The chivalric strain in Ignatius and in his religious outlook has often been noted, but it is interesting and could be of profit to look more closely at the parallel between the development of medieval chivalry under the influence of the Church and the spiritual progress of Ignatius through the workings of grace. Particularly worthy of note is the sense of mission that inspired the crusaders.

Chivalry, as we know it in history and literature, grew out of the efforts of ecclesiastical authority to channel within

legitimate bounds and towards acceptable goals the energy and ambition of the tough warriors who overran Europe from the north and settled down as heirs to the faith and culture of western Christianity. The most powerful force among these people was the chivalry or heavy-armed cavalry made up of the knights.

To be a knight one needed more than a horse to mount. To begin with, no less than three horses were required to carry not only the warrior but his weighty weapons; also men to look after the horses, to help in mounting and dismounting, and to render other services. Hence considerable material means, besides physical strength and a spirit of courage, went into the making of a knight, and he was very conscious of his worth: he was arrogant with those who dared claim authority over him, quarrelsome with his fellows and a bully towards lesser and weaker folk.

A first step to put some order in the unruly behaviour of the knights was the proclamation of the Truce of God at the beginning of the eleventh century. Its aim was minimal and rather negative: just to restrain violence in certain circumstances; but it also encouraged a greater generosity, and those who were prepared to commit themselves to something more—that is, not just to abstain from doing harm but to protect and defend the helpless—were given a special blessing which gradually evolved into an elaborate ritual, with a vigil of arms and a ceremonial bath, signifying a new life of dedication to good deeds.

A more positive move, which served both as a challenge and as an inspiration for the knights, was the launching of the Crusades by Pope Urban II in 1095. The immediate response to the papal appeal was very enthusiastic but also quite alarming, for rather than harness human resources to the service of christian ideals it seemed to use these ideals as an excuse for all manner of excesses. But although vast hordes of undesirables rallied to the call, by and large there was genuine idealism in the crusaders and in those who led them; there was a sense of carrying out a mission that ultimately came from God, through the mediation of the lawful authority of the Church: *God wills it!* was the cry;

and the crusading knight committed himself to his divinely appointed task by a special vow to recover the sacred places hallowed by the life and death of the Saviour.

St. Bernard, who was an ardent promoter of the Crusades and of the military orders to which they gave rise, spoke eloquently of the difference between the old knights, who formed not so much a *militia* as a *malitia* because they were greedy for glory and wealth, and the new soldiers of Christ who bound themselves by religious vows to follow their poor and humble Master. The impassioned oratory of Bernard was matched by a new form of literature which arose at the same time, the *Chansons de Geste* which were epics of christian heroes, or mythical figures that had been christianized, who presented a new ideal of the christian life, one that did not consist in running away from the evils of the world, as was the case with saints who were popular in those days, but rather in combating those evils through an involvement in the struggles of the world under the leadership of an outstanding prince who was himself devoted to the cause of Christ: thus grew a wealth of legend, like the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Besides extolling nobility of character and generosity in action, the new literature introduced and developed a romantic strain in the chivalric tradition: the protection of the helpless often took the form of rescuing damsels in distress without any ulterior intentions in their regard. There was women's lib in those days, but the libbing was the privilege of the knighterrant. Indeed the lady in question might be a married woman and a faithful wife who could count on the fidelity of her husband and hence did not need a champion; yet she might accept the services of a knight.

When the Crusades fell into disarray and the permanent recovery of the Holy Land no longer appeared a practical possibility, the romantic element survived and absorbed the traditional idealism of chivalry, which no longer had a concrete common objective. With the extensive use of gunpowder in battle the heavy-armed cavalry also lost its pre-eminence in warfare; knightly exercises became a pastime,

and the knightly oath was a joke played in banquet halls. The final blow and humiliation came from the very source of inspiration and glory, from literature: the immortal classic Don Quijote set all Europe laughing at the pretensions of chivalry.

But in the meanwhile there had been another and much less noticeable development in literature, namely, that spiritual writers now used the language of chivalry to present once again and in a more attractive light the stories of the traditionally popular saints. It is interesting to note that in the spanish version of The Golden Legend, which was the book of saints that Ignatius read in his convalescence, together with a Life of Christ, there is an introduction which says: *Whoever reads this book should grasp the crucifix with his right hand and hold it aloft like a royal standard bringing with it victory and happiness, as an incentive spurring generous souls to an eternal triumph, as an emblem which armed the chivalrous hearts of the saints for a courageous conquest of the world, the flesh and the devil...*

There is surely a familiar ring in this appeal? And it leads us to a rather fanciful reflection: that after all there is much in common between Don Iñigo de Loyola and Don Quijote de la Mancha. Despite his absurdity and freakishness, Quijote is a great and inspiring figure. No one will deny that, and it is admirably brought out in the lyric that very understandably became so popular, The Impossible Dream, which portrays the soul of Quijote:

To dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable foe... to love, pure and chaste from afar, to try when your arms are too weary... To reach the unreachable star! This is my quest, to follow that star, no matter how hopeless, no matter how far... To fight for the right without question or pause, to be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause... And I know, if I'll only be true to this glorious quest, that my heart will be peaceful and calm when I'm laid to my rest... And the world will be better for this, that one man scorned and covered with scars, still strove with his last ounce of courage to reach the unreachable stars...

Much more prosaically but very much in the same spirit, Ignatius tells us that whilst he was reading the pious books available during his enforced rest in Loyola he was at the

same time dreaming the impossible dream: *Of the many vain things that presented themselves to him, one took such possession of his heart that without realizing it he could spend two, three, or even four hours on end thinking of it, fancying what he would have to do in the service of a certain lady. . . He was so enamoured with all this that he did not see how impossible it would all be, because the lady was of no ordinary rank. . .* (6).

Even when he recognized his ideal elsewhere and committed himself to Christ, he tells us that whilst he was still handicapped by his wounds he reached out for the unreachable stars: *His greatest solace was to gaze often and long at the starry skies, for he thus felt a powerful interior impulse to serve our Lord* (11).

The great difference between Quijote and Iñigo is that the former read books that drew his attention to the externals of chivalry; so he clung to the worn out trappings and made himself a pathetic failure; whereas the latter found books that fixed his gaze on the very heart of chivalry, which is fidelity to an ideal and loyalty to a person: in Christ he found a person who was also a perfect ideal, and that is the secret of his success.

And eventually he found his lady too, and she was beyond doubt of no ordinary rank, being the Bride of Christ, no less. Indeed the Church in his day, for all her pomp, was in no better state than the unkempt Dulcinea; nonetheless, looking at her not with a fevered imagination, but with the eyes of faith, Ignatius recognized the beloved of Christ, who *made her clean by washing her in water with a form of words, so that when he took her to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless* (Eph. 5: 26-27).

From all that we know of him, it appears that Ignatius had a natural genius for loyalty, strengthened by the traditions of his race and family, and enlivened by a staunch faith. All through his life we find him extravagantly generous towards those to whom he felt committed, even when they proved unworthy of his trust. He himself tells us that when in Paris he walked three days without food or drink to come to the assistance of a former companion who had

cheated him but was now ill and in want (79). Later, when the first stable group of friends were gathered about him in the vicinity of Venice, he got up from his sickbed and literally rushed, ill as he was, to comfort one of their number who was thought to be dying (95).

But he was not content with such frail objects of devotion. From the earliest days his heart craved for someone who could claim his total and unqualified loyalty—the mightiest of monarchs perhaps, or the fairest and noblest of ladies, or both. Even after the sobering experience of the shattering of his legs and the clumsy attempts to mend them, he could lose himself for hours in an imaginary world, all tied up in woolly dreams, and according to his own testimony, quite oblivious of the unreality of his ideal. It is at this point that a book accidentally picked up reveals to him the true object of his quest: it is Christ, who alone can rightly claim the absolute loyalty of any heart and satisfy its most extravagant longings.

In his encounter with Christ, Ignatius experiences loyalty as liberation: not as a restriction but as a release, not as a flight into fancy but as a plunge into the heart of truth. Here we meet the first of many ignatian paradoxes: loyalty is a firm attachment, something that binds; but loyalty to Christ is a liberation from all that hampers true and total growth. Ignatius finds his heart expanding to the dimensions of the universe, and even whilst he is held down by his injured leg his vision scans the starry skies: he feels free to face any challenge, to launch on any enterprise.

But he is no longer dreaming; he is solidly established in reality and realizes that any enterprise is concretely no enterprise, that he must bring more sharply into focus his overwhelming desire to serve the Lord. He already has some sort of a plan, to go to Jerusalem; but he is open to further developments. Indeed all his life we find him precis-ing his aims; but the point to note here is that the narrowing of his objectives is also a broadening of his heart. He experiences that each new commitment is a greater liberation: it covers a smaller field but offers fresh opportunities for service, for approaching closer to him who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life for the world.

Concretely what did this mean for Ignatius? Loyalty to Christ meant loyalty to the Church—a Church that was going through the worst crisis in her history, and which the Reformers thought they must reject in order to be free to follow Christ in fidelity to the Gospel: in this Church Ignatius found the means for growth in Christ and a fuller development of his latent talents. Further, loyalty to the Church meant loyalty to the Pope—to any Pope that the troubled times might produce: for Ignatius he represented the freedom to serve anywhere in the world, to confront any situation and to do it with confidence.

The chivalric vision of Ignatius has been immortalized in the opening lines of the Formula of the Institute of the Society of Jesus, approved by Pope Julius III in 1550: *Whoever wishes to enlist under the standard of the Cross as a soldier of God in our Society, which we desire to be distinguished by the name of Jesus, and to serve the Lord alone and the Church his Bride, under the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth, should make a solemn vow of perpetual chastity, poverty and obedience, keeping what follows in mind...*

Pilgrim and servant

A pilgrimage to Jerusalem was the earliest of Ignatius' resolutions at his conversion: *What he desired most of all to do, as soon as he was well, was to go to Jerusalem, (10) and he gave much time to thinking about his decision, wishing to be wholly well that he might take to the road (11).* This is very understandable in the context in which his religious experience occurred; and it is understandable too that like much else connected with his first intimate contact with Christ, this attachment to the places sanctified by the life, death and resurrection of the Saviour remained with him even when he had to give up his plan to spend his days in Palestine, and when his grasp of spiritual things had progressed far beyond the early beginnings and he felt clearly the call to the apostolate.

It is also understandable that in sharing with others his spiritual experience, he communicated to them, together with a strong personal loyalty to Christ and a sense of mission, his own nostalgia for the Holy Land. And so it was that

when the young university scholars that had gathered around him in Paris, met at the sanctuary of Montmartre and joined him in committing themselves to the evangelical counsels and the apostolate, they also vowed to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

They were not so sure of what they would do when they got there; that would be decided on the spot. And of course, they were not sure whether they would get there at all, for that depended on the political situation; so as a measure of caution, to safeguard their resolution of dedicating themselves to the apostolate, they vowed that if the visit to Jerusalem could not be realized within a year, they would go to Rome and offer themselves for the service of the Pope.

They had no illusions about Rome. Already before his first journey thither, as a necessary step for proceeding to Jerusalem, Ignatius had been warned of the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of the Eternal City. Things had not improved since then, nor were the companions thinking in terms of apostolic strategy, to launch a campaign from what was still regarded as the centre of Christendom. It was just that not having any other rule of action, they were guided by simple prudence inspired by christian piety to accept the direction of legitimately constituted authority.

It has been said that in terms of the three times of election mentioned in the Exercises, the vow to go to Jerusalem was the fruit of a strong interior attraction characteristic of the second time, whilst the alternative of going to Rome was a calm commonsense decision proper to the third time.

But when the possibility of the eagerly desired pilgrimage slowly vanished from the horizon, the journey to Rome became a seriously binding duty. It is interesting to note that the year covered by their vow was the only period at that time when the passage to Jerusalem was not possible. They had in the meanwhile been ordained to the priesthood, and it is not at all unlikely that the extraordinarily long time that Ignatius decided to wait preparing for his first Mass was due to a sneaking hope that he might be able to celebrate it in the Holy Land; nor is it unlikely that his ardent prayer to the Virgin that he might be placed with

Christ, for all its mystical depth, also included the intention that he might be able to offer the Holy Sacrifice where Christ himself first offered it for the salvation of the world.

However that be, one does get the impression, from his own words, that though it was a time of great spiritual consolation, Ignatius was not enthusiastic about going to Rome; and once he got there, he himself tells us that he said to his companions, in a sentence strangely reminiscent of Pope John XXIII, *that he noticed that the windows were shut* (97). But before he entered the city he received a strong confirmation of his resolution, in a manner that could be said to belong to the first time for making an election, for it was for him a clear manifestation of the divine will.

We have already spoken of his experience at the wayside chapel of La Storta, of Ignatius' own meagre account of it and of his assurance regarding the reliability of the details supplied by Lainez, who was his companion at the time and later succeeded him as Superior General. Very much at the centre of what we learn from this source is the statement: *He told me that it seemed to him as if God the Father had imprinted the following words in his heart: I shall be favourable to you in Rome.*

Ignatius confessed that he did not know what these words might mean but he did understand that his destiny was in Rome; and not his only but of those who were already calling themselves The Company of Jesus, for the *you* in the sentence is in the plural: *Ego ero vobis Romae propitius*. The especially hallowed place where Christ lives today, and renews his death and resurrection, is the Church; to be visibly placed with him so that one may formally carry on his mission on earth, is to conform oneself to the authority that he himself has established. If Ignatius noticed that the windows of Rome were closed, that did not worry him, though it was to cause him a lot of trouble in the early days, because the Risen Christ is not shut out of rooms in which frightened people have locked themselves up, or in which timorous tyrants lock others up.

And here there came a further experience of the paradox of loyalty as liberation—and this time it was a common

experience of the group that had earlier called itself Friends in the Lord. This band of companions had taken it for granted that once their resolution to make themselves available to the universal apostolate was fulfilled, their togetherness would end in dispersion. But at the very point of separation they were more conscious than ever that their companionship, their mutual loyalty, had been the very condition of their availability for service: the bond that held them together had never been a bondage but rather a liberation, the release of all that was best in them, of unsuspected qualities which the complementarity of their characters had brought out and fostered; it could also be the means to ensure that their services were in fact used to the best advantage.

And so they came, through a model exercise of discernment, to the decision, so fraught with consequences for the Church and indeed for the world, that even whilst they were scattered to the ends of the earth in the missions entrusted to them by the Vicar of Christ, they would stay together in spirit and accept one of their number as their leader and as the visible sign of that union of hearts that they had attained through their common loyalty to Christ: thus the Society of Jesus came to be established on the principle of loyalty as liberation.

The resolution is very simply recorded in the minutes of the deliberations held in Rome in the Lent of 1539: *In the end, we came to the conclusion that, as the most merciful and loving Lord had deigned to bring us together and bind us to one another, feeble men of such diverse nationality and character, we ought not to destroy this union established by God but rather daily to strengthen and confirm it, making ourselves one body in which each took thought and care for the others, for the greater fruit of souls.*

And at this point, the paradox of loyalty as liberation was crowned by a further paradox, or by a further refinement of the same paradox: the very thing that the companions had thought would be the end of their togetherness, namely, the acceptance by the Pope of their offer to go wherever he might send them—became the *principle and chief foundation* of their new fellowship as members of an

officially recognized religious order in the Church. The phrase is from an early document, composed by Ignatius and entitled Constitutions and Declarations regarding Missions, which is the nucleus round which the Jesuit Constitutions took shape. In the Constitutions themselves, Ignatius thus explains the special vow of obedience to the Pope with regard to tasks he may want to be carried out:

Those who first united to form the Society were from different provinces and realms and did not know into which regions they were to go, whether among the faithful or the unbelievers; and therefore, to avoid erring in the path of the Lord, they made that promise or vow in order that His Holiness might distribute them for greater glory to God. They did this in conformity with their intention to travel throughout the world and, when they could not find the desired spiritual fruit in one region, to pass on to another and another, ever intent on seeking the greater glory of God our Lord and the greater aid of souls (605).

A mischievous scholar has drawn attention to a parallel between the above text and the passage in the Autobiography where Ignatius narrates how in the very early stage of his spiritual journey, when he was perplexed about the course of action he should adopt, he left the decision to his mule, who determined the road he would take (15,16. Incidentally, it is at this point that Ignatius begins referring to himself as a pilgrim, and he retains this designation right to the end—he was always a man on a quest). Without subscribing to what seems implied in the alleged similitude, we might nevertheless ask how a group of intelligent and learned men arrived at the conclusion that whatever the Pope ordered would in fact be most conducive to the glory of God and the good of humanity. Even looking at the papacy with the eyes of faith one can hardly reach such an absolute position.

In order to find a satisfactory answer we would have to enter into the experience of this group, and in particular of Ignatius himself. But it would seem that at a more practical and objective level too, one could find an explanation and a justification for the so-called fourth vow. What we want to suggest is that in giving the reason that we have

quoted above, Ignatius is not just saying that because they did not know where to go they decided to ask the Pope and to accept his guidance: but rather, that because they wanted to move from place to place according to the demands of God's service and human needs, in order to safeguard their liberty of mind and heart, they committed themselves to the Pope so that they would not be attached to any particular place or ministry, but maintain always a universal vision and a psychological alertness that would enable them to recognize the call of God and to follow it generously.

This idea can be stated in more general terms by saying that Ignatian obedience, besides its profound theological and even mystical foundations, has also a very practical and psychological function of insuring alertness and flexibility of spirit. This is a natural value—to use the traditional terminology—but it has great supernatural significance; it corresponds to the freedom from inordinate attachments in the Exercises, which enables us to find and embrace the divine will. This applies not only to the one who obeys orders; the Superior who gives the order will also, if he exercises his authority properly, be putting himself in the dispositions that are most conducive to the discovery of God's will concerning the matter in hand.

In order to help Superiors and all those concerned to arrive at concrete decisions with regard to apostolic works that might be undertaken, the Seventh Part of the Jesuit Constitutions has a set of detailed directives. They are still referred to when making choices in face of many and urgent demands for service. Yet they only give general principles, and obvious ones at that. They are idealistic rather than practical. But today we are in a position to appreciate a different and much more important practicality in this set of instructions. Today we are told by management experts that in order to keep an organization fully alive, and effective in the attainment of meaningful goals, it is not enough to rethink objectives and update structures; what is important and decisive is to secure the constant renewal of the mental structures of the personnel, to keep their vision bright and alert, and their spirit young.

Our experience confirms this, and there is a growing awareness that any renewal must be first of all a renewal of persons. This is what Ignatius seems to have in mind in giving us norms for the selection of ministries: he is not telling us how to choose, but with what attitude we must face the task of choosing—and this is more important than any amount of techniques for assessing situations and resources, or of strategies for action.

Of Ignatius himself, it has been said that the most characteristic event in his life was that he readily went to school as an adult, as he did in Barcelona (54) and then in Paris (73). He was always ready to learn; he kept an open mind and an open heart. But he did not cultivate openness for its own sake. His concern was for service—and indeed, the ever greater service of the Lord and of humanity. It is amazing to see the number of times that this thought of the greater service appears in the above-mentioned guidelines for the apostolate. And if openness was for service, then obedience was for openness—not a blind obedience, therefore, but one that is able to see more clearly.

There is much to ponder here, in a Church that from the Second Vatican Council has proposed to herself the self-image of pilgrim and servant.

Contemplative in Action

The term *Contemplative in Action* has long been associated with the name of Ignatius of Loyola and is regarded as the best expression of the ideal presented by ignatian spirituality. As such it has been the object of study and reflection for many generations, and a source of inspiration. It has attracted special attention in our days as a clue to the solution of some problems facing religious life. But there seems to be some confusion still, about what it means and how it should be realized. Here is an account of one search for an answer.

To begin with, there is no evidence that Ignatius himself ever used or even knew the expression. It is commonly attributed to Jerome Nadal, whom Ignatius regarded as the man who best understood him and who was his Vicar General and the promulgator of the experimental Jesuit

Constitutions all over Europe. Nadal has left behind a voluminous collection of the notes he used for talks to various newly established jesuit communities. In some reflections on prayer, written in the year following the death of Ignatius and in a kind of compressed Latin that is difficult to translate, he says that Ignatius was *simul in actione contemplativus*.

The immediate context is as follows: after referring to the remarkable awareness that Ignatius had of the Blessed Trinity, Nadal goes on to affirm that *this manner of prayer was granted to Ignatius by a great and very special privilege; and also this further grace, that in everything, in word and deed, he was aware of and sensitive to the presence of God and the attraction of the supernatural—being contemplative in his very action. His own favourite way of putting it was: God must be found in all things.*

Ignatius' *finding God in all things* is still popular, at least among Jesuits; but Nadal's *Contemplative in Action* is regarded as the better formulation of the ignatian ideal. However, there is no clear agreement on how exactly it is to be understood. The more common interpretation, which does not lead to a definite practical conclusion, is that Nadal suggests a joining together of the two classical components of the christian life—sometimes referred to as the vertical and the horizontal—namely, reaching out towards God and reaching out towards the world and particularly towards one's fellow human beings.

Before proceeding further, it should be noticed that the idea of uniting contemplation and action was not original nor even new, either for Ignatius or for Nadal. It comes out very strongly, to mention but one instance, in a medieval franciscan treatise that was in wide circulation and might well have been known to Ignatius and quite possibly served as inspiration to Nadal; it is called *Stimulus Amoris*, and has a chapter entitled precisely: *Qualiter homo debet in omni actione frui contemplatione*. We quote from a quaint old translation:

The teaching of this chapter, *How that a man in every action ought to enjoy contemplation*, is very simple: one who seeks God in everything—that is, tries to please God in all that he does—will find God in all things; he will have the blessedness of

the contemplative life joined together with the active—O felix talis qui cum activa contemplativum haberet. The idea is elaborated by showing how in practice one can seek and find God in all one's activity, and the fruit of the process is expressed in traditional language: *By this means he so ministers to Our Lord with Martha, as he departs not from his feet with Mary.* There is here a coordination, rather than the more traditional subordination of action to contemplation; and it is suggested that not only can contemplation lead to and support action, but action can play the same role towards contemplation.

So far *The Goad of Divine Love*. How does the statement of Nadal compare with this? To begin with, for him there is no question either of coordination or of subordination, nor even of putting together two things in any way whatsoever. Grammatically speaking, he does not join two nouns or two verbs; rather, he combines a noun and an adjective, adding an adverb for good measure: *simul in actione contemplativus*. This makes an awkward construction and creates insuperable difficulties for translation, not to speak of the problem of determining the exact sense of the original.

Simul means *together*—either in time or in space—and it links two or more words that are in the same grammatical category. If it is used to qualify and connect a noun and an adjective, its meaning is not at all clear. Hence the common practice, in this particular case, has been simply to ignore it, as if Nadal had said nothing more than *in actione contemplativus*. But this is to lose a precious clue to what he is trying to say about Ignatius. A more promising approach is to regard the *simul* as indicating, in this peculiar context, not togetherness but oneness or identity. The whole phrase might then be translated, as was done earlier, *contemplative in his very action*.

But what exactly does this mean? To answer this further question, one would have to cast at least a cursory glance at the history of the problem of the relationship between contemplation and action in the christian spiritual tradition, in the light of which it would seem that Nadal not only suggests something new with regard to that relationship, but in the process also changes the established meaning of the terms.

Fathers of the Church like St Augustine found it difficult to understand how exactly Jesus linked the cultivation of meaningful human relationships with the experience of God. For together with his commandment of fraternal love he also had the promise: *Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me; and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him. . . . To have seen me is to have seen the Father* (Jo. 14: 21,9). According to the philosophy that served as an instrument for the christian understanding of the faith, man could attain to the reality beyond this world only through the exercise of his highest faculty which was his intellect. How then could the disciple of Christ come to an experience of God through external activity in favour of his neighbour?

The answer that came to be accepted was that in this life one must be committed to responsible moral action and concern for others, for which in the next life one would be rewarded with the beatific vision of God. Of course, even in this life one could devote oneself to the contemplation of divine things, and this was in principle a higher form of activity than charitable action, though love for others could never be absent from the christian life. Such was the monastic ideal, cultivated both in the East and in the West.

The benedictine *Ora et Labora*—which, somewhat like *in actione contemplativus*, was not formulated by St Benedict but is regarded as the apt expression of the ideal he represents—does not mean the equation of prayer and work; nor does it include any and every kind of activity; the community laboured so as to be self-sufficient and independent of the world at large. So what is affirmed is the exclusion from the life of the monk of all that is not the single-hearted quest of God nor is humanly required to support that quest. Prayer, contact with God—or contemplation—is the goal; a certain amount and a certain kind of work—or action—is a condition for attaining the goal; everything else is superfluous and a hindrance.

Among the Scholastics it was St Thomas Aquinas who, with his genius for synthesis, presented a comprehensive

view that has greatly influenced subsequent thinking: he still held to the aristotelian principle that the intellect is the highest and most characteristic human faculty, but recognized that for a Christian it is love that holds the primacy in all activity. According to him, intellectual activity by way of contemplation is directed to the love of God, whilst external activity or charitable action is directed to love of the neighbour; the first is therefore a nobler form of activity. But considering the total christian life in its concrete reality, the most noble is the apostolic life, which combines contemplation and action since the apostle communicates to others for their benefit what he has received from God in prayer.

The thomistic *contemplata aliis tradere* became the classical formula for the so-called mixed life embraced by the friars; though from what was said earlier, it can be seen that there is a franciscan tradition that conceives differently the union of contemplation and action. Indeed, *to share with others the fruits of contemplation* has practically come to be regarded as the clue to the understanding of the various forms of active religious life in the recent history of the Church.

It may be noted here that, in this matter as in others, there is the influence of the philosophical definition of man as *rational animal*: whatever pertains to human beings is understood and explained in terms of soul and body, of mind and matter. There is not much thinking in terms of *person*, which is the ultimate human reality, unique and undefinable in each one. Obviously, neither this last statement, nor all that has been said before, does full justice to the christian spiritual tradition. The present purpose is merely to provide an introduction and a context for what is to follow.

Coming now to Ignatius, he would readily agree that the apostolic life is the most christlike; but he did not think of it as a mixture where two things are joined together. For him there are not two things. There is only the total commitment of oneself to God in Christ which expresses itself in any kind of activity, be it mental or physical, be it prayer or labour, depending on what God expects at any

given moment and in accordance with what Christ teaches by his words and example. This total commitment establishes an intimate union which is primarily realized, not at the level of doing anything, be it contemplation or action, but just of being—being with God. The union is not an activity, in the usual sense of the word, but a state: it involves an attitude or disposition of openness and sensitivity to God, which can and will issue in activity, whether spiritual or corporal, but is not identified with either.

Moreover, the ignatian *finding God in all things* means that the union or relationship with God, since it is established at the core of one's being, not only issues in activity, but so penetrates and transforms all activity and the whole person, that every experience becomes an experience of God, and all action not only springs from contact with God but is itself a deepening of that contact, is contemplation.

Today contemplation is increasingly understood in the broader and deeper sense of a quality of the spiritual life—a dimension, according to current terminology—rather than as one type of what very significantly was called mental prayer. The two meanings are distinct, but related. And both kinds of contemplation are needed. Here it may help to refer back to what has been said much earlier about communication and communion; and about the mutual awareness that exists between persons that love one another, and particularly among the members of a family, and how it is cultivated. We do need time to be alone and quiet with God—as Christ himself did—but we need it precisely in order to be with God always: that is the important thing.

All this has been explained already. Here we may note that a certain contemplative dimension is found in all human life—or should be found as a necessary condition for wholeness of being, as the unifying factor in the multiplicity of dispersing activities. This dimension, in a given person, could be dominated by a great ideal or a great love. It could be dominated by the love of God and the ideal of his service—which would then qualify all that one does and all that one is, all one's contact with reality.

And this brings us back to Ignatius. In a wellknown

passage in the Jesuit Constitutions (273) he speaks of the Superior General being *closely united to God our Lord and intimate with him both in prayer and in all activity*. Here he distinguishes union with God from either prayer or any other activity, and he associates it with all activity without making any difference. It is also generally believed that in thus portraying the Superior of the Society he is inevitably revealing himself. And in fact, this is the picture that Nadal draws of him in the passage quoted earlier, when he speaks of a further grace received by Ignatius: *in everything, in word and deed, he was aware of and sensitive to the presence of God and the attraction of the supernatural*.

It is at this point that Nadal brings in his famous phrase: *simul in actione contemplativus*. There is therefore good reason to believe that the adjective *contemplativus* refers not to any particular spiritual activity or exercise, but to a basic quality of Ignatius, his intimacy with God and awareness of the divine presence; and that the noun *in actione* takes in not only apostolic or external work, but everything he did including his prayer. The adverb *simul* seems to be added to eliminate all semblance of duality and to indicate, as was suggested earlier, not composition but identity. Admittedly Nadal thus changes the commonly accepted meaning both of contemplation and of action, and this can cause no little confusion; but his intention is rather to clarify what he regards as an important feature of the Jesuit vocation, for he goes on to say of Ignatius:

Now this grace and light of his heart we saw reflected in the radiance of his countenance and in the serene supernatural confidence with which he went about his tasks. We could not help being impressed by this, as well as inspired, for we felt that in some way that grace was communicated to us. Hence we believe that this privilege which we know was granted to Father Ignatius, is also given to the whole Society; we are confident that this gift of prayer and contemplation is available to all of us, and we affirm that it is linked with our vocation.

In the opening lines of this same passage, Nadal more than suggests that the way for a Jesuit to share in the grace of the Founder is through the Spiritual Exercises.

This in turn will be explained, we hope, by what has been said in the rest of this book about the path of interior knowledge. We have also made the point that Ignatius was not the first to discover the deeper level of awareness, but that his originality lay in making it the beginning of a whole spiritual programme. In fact, the treatise *Stimulus Amoris*, in the chapter mentioned earlier, makes reference to an inner core at which a transformation, a veritable divinization, should take place:

For he that will, as I said, enjoy the contemplative life with the active, contemplating his Lord in all things, it seems to me that this way is short and good; to wit, that, wholly recollecting himself, he enter into the most inward secrets of his heart, and there resolve, and, as it were, melt himself in God, so that he neither see nor feel anything in all the world but God. And so, being in a manner Deified and transformed into God, to whatsoever he turns him, he will consider nothing but God, and what work soever he does he will think he does it not to man, but to God alone. And as long as he shall observe and keep this form he shall see God in all things, and in his active labour shall enjoy the contemplative life.

Here the author speaks, as he does throughout, of joining together two things, two kinds of lives—or two dimensions or activities of one christian life. But there is also the mention of a deeper level at which the love of God is not so much an activity as a state or disposition that transforms (or *informs*) all activity. It is not impossible, as was suggested earlier, that Nadal drew some inspiration from this text. But he goes further, and in order to be in line with the unified vision of Ignatius, he identifies contemplation with the state of intimacy with God, and action with all activity. And so he coins the phrase: *simul in actione contemplativus*.

In this way Nadal draws attention to the distinctive characteristic of ignatian spirituality. Ignatius himself, at the conclusion of his Autobiography, states in all simplicity the point to which his spiritual journey has brought him: he confesses that even after his conversion he had often failed to respond to God, but *he had always kept growing in devotion—that is, facility in finding God; and this was greater now than ever in his life. Always, no matter when he sought God, he found him* (99).

The phrase here is simply *finding God*, and it might be credibly argued, from what has been said up to now, that what Ignatius has in mind is not so much *finding God in all things*, but rather *finding God beyond all things*, and then *finding all things in God*. To use the classical terms, he is not speaking of the *via causalitatis* (attaining to God through creatures) but of the *via negationis* (affirming God beyond all creatures) culminating in the *via eminentiae* (discovering all creatures in God). But such subtleties, very legitimate in themselves, were foreign to Ignatius' thought-processes, and certainly to his language. In the Jesuit Constitutions (288) he speaks indifferently of all the three *ways* when he says that those in training *should often be exhorted to seek God our Lord in all things, stripping themselves of the love of creatures to the extent that this is possible, in order to turn their love on the Creator of them, by loving him in all creatures and all of them in him, in conformity to his holy and divine will.*

At the culminating point of the Exercises, in the Contemplation for attaining Love, all the *ways* meet and merge, and lead to the faith-experience for which the favourite ignatian name is *finding God in all things*. By such an experience one becomes what Nadal calls *Contemplative in Action*.

The ideal of Contemplative in Action, when properly understood, may well be regarded as a spiritual summit where that encounter takes place to which we made reference in the opening lines of this book: the encounter between the vision of Ignatius, the theology of the post-conciliar Church and the findings of present-day psychology. We have tried to convey something of the fruitful concord that emerges from this summit meeting, as we traced the path of interior knowledge.

Postscript: The last major event of the Ignatian Jubilee will be the second International Congress on the Spiritual Exercises, scheduled for September 1991 in the castle of Loyola — just twenty-five years after the first Congress was held in the same hallowed spot, soon after the closure of the Second Vatican Council. The question then was whether and how the ignatian retreat was relevant in the post-conciliar age. The theme now is: “The Spiritual Exercises in relation to and in connection with the present moment.”

In the intervening period it has become abundantly evident that Ignatius and his teaching have been in the vanguard of christian renewal in the last decades. So we end with the prayer that he may still be a potent inspiration to the women and men of the third millennium of the Church's history, as they strive for the ideal which he proposes to himself at the beginning of his Autobiography: *a generous spirit ablaze with God.*

ABLAZE WITH GOD is the title chosen by the author for a further literary production on the occasion of the Jubilee, soon to be published by Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.

Besides a fresh and carefully monitored translation of the Memoirs, or autobiography, of Saint Ignatius, the book has two essays showing how the charism of the Founder and the dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises are illumined by this personal account of the ignatian religious experience — thus complementing, without repetition, what has already been proposed in *The Path of Interior Knowledge*.



THE AUTHOR

Parmananda Divarkar has spent most of his life in India, where he was born (Goa 1922) and ordained (Pune, 1952) and for many years exercised a varied apostolate in university circles, lecturing on psychology of religion and directing courses in ongoing christian formation, besides being chaplain and student counsellor (Bombay, 1956-1971).

He worked nine years in Rome (1975-1983) as Assistant to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, during which time he also collaborated with the Ignatian Centre at the Jesuit headquarters. Now back in Bombay, he edits the Ignatian review, IGNIS.



TWO
IGNATIAN JUBILEE
BOOKS

By Parmananda R. Divarkar S.J.

THE PATH OF INTERIOR KNOWLEDGE is based on retreats and courses of lectures dealing with Ignatian spirituality, conducted by the author in Asia, Europe and America. Its main thesis is that "the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, when seen in the light of his own religious experience, reveal a vision of reality and a dynamic of personal growth that are very much in line with theological thinking after the Second Vatican Council and with the insights of modern psychology into human development."

ABLAZE WITH GOD supports the above thesis by presenting a fresh translation of the Memoirs, or autobiography, of Saint Ignatius, together with essays that make the text come alive as an authoritative statement of the charism of the Founder of the Society of Jesus, and a privileged guide to the inner structure of the Spiritual Exercises.

The two books are offered to Jesuits and their friends on the occasion of the Ignatian Jubilee, 1990-1991.

GUJARAT SAHITYA PRAKASH
ANAND 388 001
INDIA